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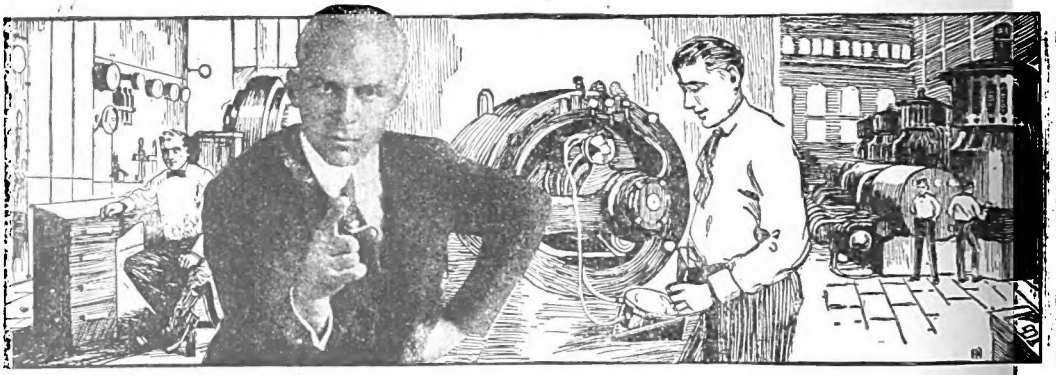

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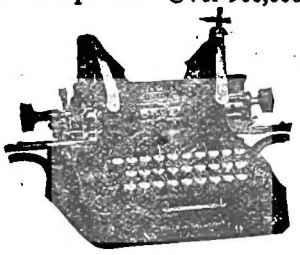

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ADVENTURE
day 30th, 1922

Published three times a month by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City. Yearly subscription $6.00 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 1, 1910, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

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Volume 24
Number 6

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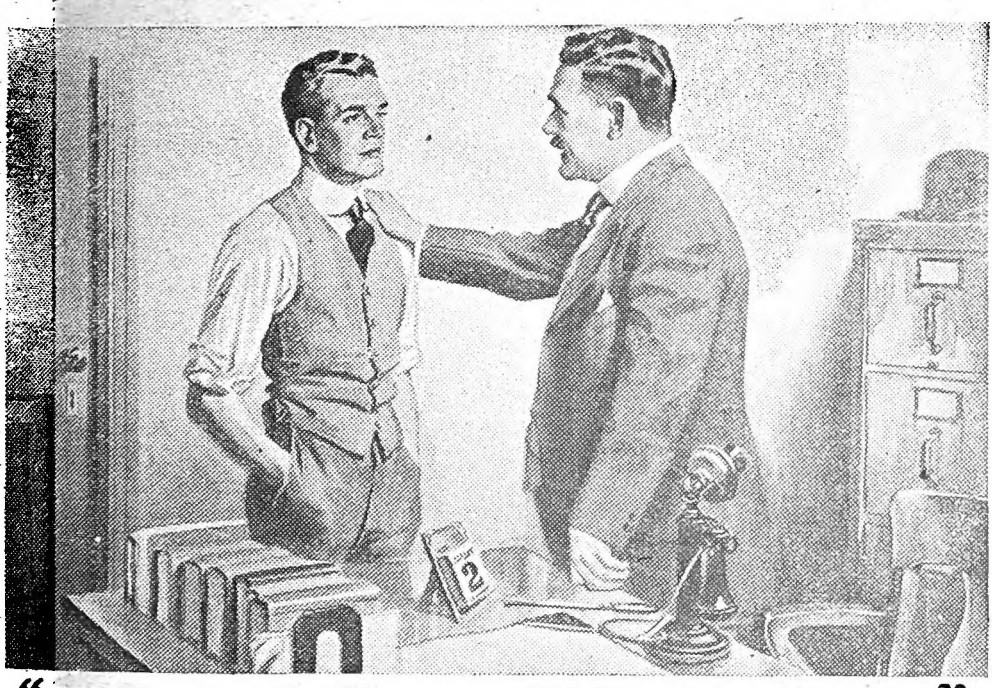

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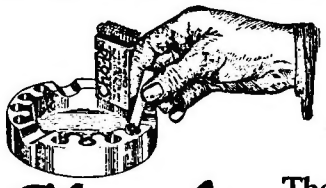

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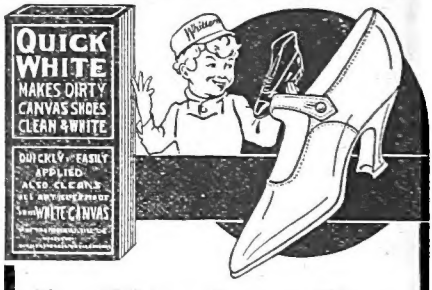

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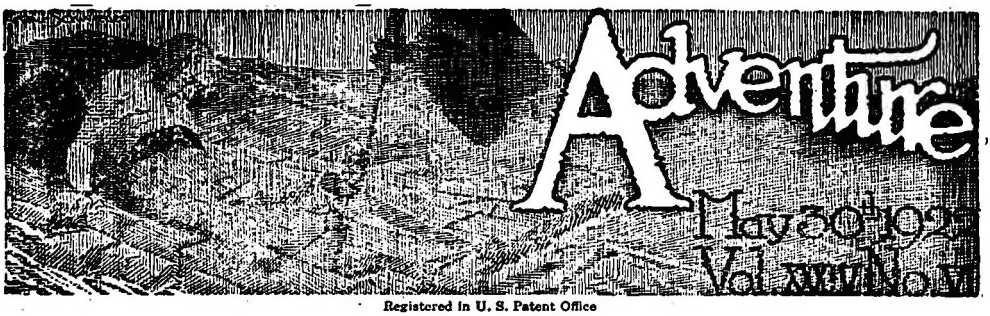

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ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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Headings . . . . . **Arthur Schwieder**

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RED hatchets and war belts were the silent messengers carried through the forest paths of the Alleghanies when the Indians, left without the support of their French allies by the fall of Montreal, banded together to stand against the now dominant English. In 1763 Pontiac stalked into power and things started to happen. "WAR WAMPUM," a four-part serial by Hugh Pendexter, starts in the next issue.

FOUR down-at-heel white men enter the service of *Wong Fu Li.* At his command they commit deeds of piracy on the high seas, but there is a point at which they draw the line. "FLOTSAM," a complete novelette by J. Allan Dunn, in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

Don't forget the dates of issue for *Adventure*—the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month

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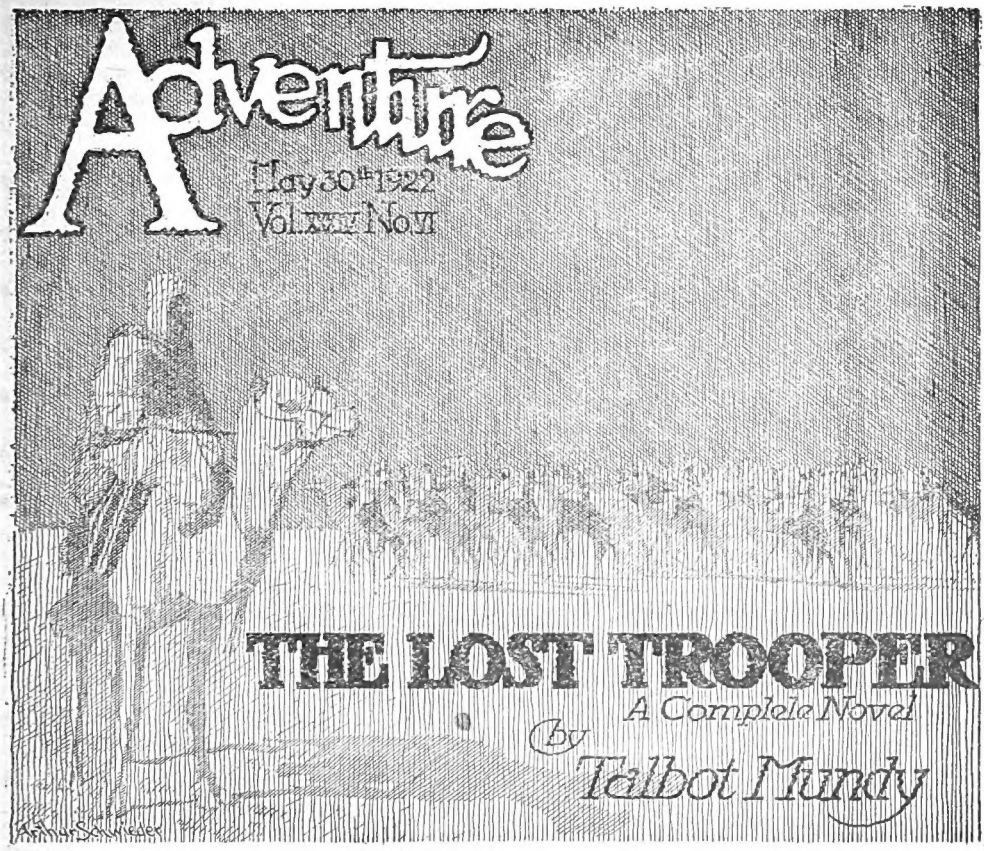

Author of "The Lion of Petra," "The Woman Ayisha," etc.

CHAPTER I

"Talk about transmuting elements—"

HOW can you begin a tale at the beginning, when it has as many beginnings as there are people in it? I don't see that these critics who make literary laws have done much else than shut out two-thirds of the best tales by making it impossible to tell them.

At any rate, as I'm telling this one; and as nobody need listen if he doesn't like, I'm going to begin it where I please, which happens to be in Berlin, Germany, which I visited long enough after the Boer War for men who fought all through it, to show themselves there without having to have police protection.

My business is prospecting, and I hadn't made my little pile in those days—hadn't attained, in other words, to that only essential of contentment in this world—the ability as well as the inclination and the right to suit yourself as to what you'll do next, where you'll go and how.

My particular pet delight is independence. But in those days I was trying to get a syndicate of Prussian *vons* and *zus* to finance an undertaking in what was then known as German East Africa. Looking back through the smoke of adventurous years, I should say now that it would have been about as easy to persuade the U. S. Government to finance a claimant to the throne of France. I cooled my heels, spent money in a very bad hotel, and dare say I should have been insulted finally, if it weren't for my odd inch or so above six feet and the muscle that carries it upright. Even in those days the Prussians weren't openly rude to any one they weren't sure they could lick.

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But I made a profit, for I met an Australian named Jeremy Ross. It was worth a trip half around the world to make that man's acquaintance.

He was swearing at the methods of the same hotel proprietor and trying to tap the same financial sluices. We had two common grievances, which is sufficient basis for friendship in most circumstances; and, as we both were, comparatively speaking, broke, we walked about together a good deal, seeing what Berliners thought were sights, while the syndicate of *vons* and *zus* considered how to put one over on us—an entirely vain devotion of super-thought on their part, as well as a waste of our time.

Even in those days I had reached the point of tolerating other people's manners and notions right up to the chalk-line where they trespass on my liberty. But Jeremy Ross hadn't traveled as much, or met as many weird varieties as I had of the "manners" that "mayketh man."

Having served through the Boer War as a trooper in the First Australian Horse, he had a profound contempt for, and enmity against all officers who were not Australians risen from the ranks. But he didn't include all Australian officers in his catalog of the blessed by any means, having, as he put it, "eaten dirt from twenty-five too many of them."

"Talk about transmuting elements," said Jeremy. "Turning iron into gold is nothing to it. Take a chap, who's a good mining-mate and a decent trooper, with no more use for the airs of officers than you've got, put a couple of imitation bronze stars on his shoulder, and you've turned him into a cocky ass, who'll slate you for fatigue if you tell him as much as where he came from and where he'd go if he'd take advice. Officers ought to be elected, that's what I think; and I can think as good as any one."

The sight of a three-inch red collar with gold lace on it to Jeremy was more irritating than a red flag to a black bull. A monocle acted on him as fulminate of mercury does on dynamite. So a jaunt shoulder-to-shoulder with him through the streets of Berlin was hardly a soporific. He took to imitating the swagger of the Prussian officers, with a silver coin stuck in his eye by way of emphasis. And Jeremy Ross is noticeable—a regular "corn-stalk," still wearing his big felt hat—lean, long-legged, striding like a horseman, none too comfortable on his feet; a handsome fellow, whom the women glanced at twice, which in itself was good ground for a quarrel in the Prussia of those days. So the Prussians had to notice him.

Still, somehow or other I contrived to keep him out of actual difficulties, even when he refused to give up his chair at a restaurant table in order that a party of Uhlan officers might have the corner of the beer-garden to themselves. I daresay the size of the two of us, added to our obvious unity of determination, had something to do with the officers' haughty retirement from the scene; but the proprietor wouldn't serve us after that, and Jeremy's wrath boiled over. He reached the conclusion that all Prussian arrogance was bluff, and when we strode out together after half-an-hour I knew that trouble was inevitable. But I liked him finely, and stood by.

It came even quicker than I expected. We were walking up a street that leads into Unter den Linden, remarking the free figure and neat ankles of an American girl going the same way about twenty yards in front of us. The sight started Jeremy to bragging about the female loveliness of New South Wales.

"None like 'em! None like 'em anywhere. A man couldn't be a polygamist in New South. One of our girls is worth a hundred from anywhere else in the world, and do your own picking. I'm going home again. A man's a fool to leave Australia."

The girl ahead of us was a tourist obviously. She was carrying parcels in both arms and had a camera slung over her shoulder by a strap. She was unused to Berlin, for she tried to take the wall of a monocled, high collared *von* in cavalry uniform, who came clinking his saber and spurs down-street. I suppose nobody but the traffic cop in her home city had ever challenged her right of way before.

Well, the Prussian behaved according to type. He bore what he had been taught to think was dignity in mind, shouldered her out into the middle of the side-walk, knocking both parcels from her hands; and then he smirked at her with a view to starting a flirtation. According to the code, she ought to have felt flattered by his attention; but, being merely an American, uneducated in such matters, and seeing he made no attempt to spoil his corset by stooping to pick up the parcels, she looked about for

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a man. She seemed bewildered—hardly indignant at first—I think she was too much taken by surprize for that. The Prussian probably mistook her blush for a symptom of admiration for himself, for he murmured something and tried to take her arm.

She shook herself free of him at almost exactly the same second that Jeremy's fist took the Prussian in the jaw, sending him crupper over neck into the gutter. And it proved entirely characteristic of Jeremy that he ignored the Prussian forthwith, picked up the lady's parcels, and began a flirtation in his own way, on his own account. You'd have thought, if there had been time to think, that no such incident as spoiling a Prussian's dignity had ever taken place in his young life.

The Prussian didn't do much thinking. He was automatic. He scrambled to his feet, livid and bristling with all the rage he felt entitled to, and drew his saber. He didn't shout, or even swear. He had seen Jeremy and me together, and it was all one to him which of us had struck him. He came for the nearest of us, which happened to be me. And I didn't do much thinking either.

A man with a long saber is at a disadvantage at close quarters against any one with strength enough to use his hands as nature intended. I don't like bloodshed, particularly mine, so I took his toy away from him and broke it. I have been told since that that is considered a horrible indignity to put on a military person, and if I had realized as much at the time I dare say I wouldn't have broken the thing. I could have thrown it across the street, for instance. However, the harm was done.

Most of the mere civilians in sight proved their meanness by scattering for cover—didn't want to be called as witnesses, most likely. The only non-military gent who took an interest in the proceedings was a cabman, who drove past, turned and drove back again, willing to be anybody's friend at so much per. I gave the Prussian the two pieces of his sword, supposing he would enjoy making himself scarce at once, and signaled to the cabman to come and get him. But there were lots of things I didn't know in those days.

Jeremy was still talking to the girl—Miss Eliot I remember her name was. Honestly, I believe he had almost forgotten the whole incident. When the Prussian beckoned and a policeman came running with drawn sword, Jeremy didn't realize in the least that he was the goal—or rather, that the nearest jail was goal, and we three meant for footballs.

Several officers passed across the street half a block away, and our friend with the broken sword shouted to them. I knew enough German to get the gist of his remarks, and enough of politics to be aware that jail is no place from which to address your embassy, if you hope for satisfactory results. Besides, five more officers were straining their corset laces badly in a hurry to help their man; even with Jeremy to aid me, I couldn't take all their swords away. It was time now to act first and think afterwards.

The policeman was loud-mouthed and importunate. He ordered us, Miss Eliot included, to march to the jail in front of him, and seemed to expect us to do it. I'm told we broke no less than nine laws by refusing to obey him; he brandished his sword in my face, but did not strike, and I believe the ass thought I was trying to help him when I seized Jeremy by the neck and shook him, to make him see sense. He wanted to stay there and fight all Berlin.

I caught the eye of the cabman, who drew up as close to us as he dared on the far side of the street. It did not take any persuading to get Miss Eliot into the cab, but I had to use violence on Jeremy, who has never since quite forgiven me for spoiling what he swears would have been a gorgeous victory. He went into the cab backwards, using bad words freely.

That sort of thing was evidently not unknown in Berlin, for the cabman needed no instructions. He whipped the pretty good horse to a gallop, and turned two corners before speaking. Then, slowing down to a trot as he turned a third corner, he leaned back to drive his bargain. He said he supposed that the *gnadige Herrschaften* had the British Embassy in mind.

But Jeremy and I were as one man in denouncing that suggestion.

The whole British Empire isn't worth a —— to a chap in trouble," laughed Jeremy. "They'd simply hand us over to the Square-heads. Maybe yes, if we had coronets embroidered on our underwear, but the socks I stole from a duke in the Boer War made the squadron jealous on the trooper going home, so I auctioned 'em off

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to the crew and as like as not they're in Hongkong or Yokohama. No, we can't pose as dukes. Let's try your embassy."

He chuckled while he talked, as if we had all played hookey from school and were having a gorgeous time. The cabman demanded a thousand marks, which I suppose was about the tariff in the circumstances; but Jeremy knew German pretty well, and offered to gamble with him—two hundred marks or nothing. He hadn't a trace of fear of consequences, and proved it by getting out to walk when the cabman turned obstinate; whereat a settlement was soon reached; we agreed on a hundred and fifty marks as the fare, and reached the United States Embassy streets ahead of the news.

The ambassador was out of town, as luck would have it; he might have been diffident, especially as one of us was an Australian. But there was a secretary there, whose aunt or somebody came from Miss Eliot's home-town, and what with the girl's influence, and Jeremy's chuckles, we had him convinced before the military telephoned. They had drawn the British Embassy blank by that time as well as all the leading hotels, and were growing furious.

I don't know the full extent of the lies that that good secretary told, and I certainly won't tell his name, for he did his duty and deserves a curtain. But I heard him say over the phone that we were all three intimate friends of Colonel Roosevelt; and when a red-necked colonel without corsets came to demand our surrender on about a hundred criminal counts, the secretary received him alone in a small room and contrived to satisfy him somehow.

The long and the short of it was that Miss Eliot was permitted to continue her journey to Switzerland, which she subsequently did, leaving Jeremy disconsolate for fifteen minutes and the story to progress without her. I have never seen her since, although I have been told that she described me when she got home as a "great, dark lunatic, who might have got her into jail if it hadn't been for the handsome Mr. Jeremy Ross." But she never saw him again either, so no harm was done.

Jeremy and I were ordered to leave Germany that night, under embassy escort as far as the frontier—for which we had to pay. We didn't mind that much, since business with the *vons* and *zus* looked stagnant. We were also forbidden to return for twelve months, and forbidden even after that lapse of time without a special police permit. But as neither of us ever wanted to go back, that hardly mattered.

We had supper at the embassy, and Jeremy passed the time with conjuring tricks and ventriloquism, giving a performance with hardly any paraphernalia that would have passed muster on any stage in the world. He could do stunts with billiard balls, and make a Japanese mask talk in a way that brought to mind those evergreen romances about Indian fakirs. In fact, I don't think it would have surprized anybody much when it was time for us to start for the train, if he had performed the fabled trick of throwing up a rope into the air, climbing up it out of sight, and pulling the rope after him.

The only thing that could surprize you about Jeremy Ross after you had known him for an hour or two would be to see him gloomy or depressed, or at a loss for some unusual way of passing time.

All the way to the Dutch frontier he kept the embassy escort and the train crew amused with sleight-of-hand tricks, banter and ventriloquism. Perhaps his best stunt was making a fat man, who had a corner seat in our compartment say outrageous things about the Kaiser in his sleep. When he tired of that he spilled a flow of reminiscences that could not have been lies, because no man could have invented all that much.

He seemed to have worked at every trade there is, and to have forgotten nothing. Youngest son of a well-to-do ranch-owner, he had rebelled at the station routine and set out to make his own fortune at the age of fourteen. When I met him in Berlin he was twenty-three or four, and though the fortune hadn't taken shape yet he seemed to have enough to get along with and was certainly well equipped with experience.

WHEN we left the train in Holland the conductor, the ticket-man and several passengers, including the fat one who had been made to say things in his sleep, insisted on shaking hands. It was a miserable little junction station, but that did not disturb Jeremy; as soon as the farewells were over and we had seen the embassy fellow into the return train for Berlin he took my arm and proposed that we should set out at once to explore Holland.

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But I demurred. I couldn't afford in those days to wander at large—or thought I couldn't, which comes to about the same thing.

"Something'll turn up. It always does," he prophesied. "Dutch money's all right; you can spend it. It's round and it rolls. Let's get some."

But I hadn't yet learned the difference between being timorous and being cautious. I quoted the old jingle that has somehow lasted down the years as a label for the Meinheers—

"In matters of commerce the fault of the Dutch
Lies in giving too little and asking too much."

"All right," he answered. "Come with me to Australia. Let's try West Aus. Get some camels and find gold in the desert. Great game. Make a pile quick and settle down to a life of roving. Come on!"

I wonder what it is that makes a man deliberately decide against his inclination. There wasn't really any reason why I shouldn't go with Jeremy. A merrier companion couldn't be, or a braver. He would get into trouble, of course, but chuckle his way out of it; and you don't mind sharing any sort of difficulty with a mate who is game to lift his end of it. His optimism and my comparative caution might have made us good partners.

But I had London in mind and a brace of millionaires whose profitable passion is to finance such folk as me, and Jeremy wouldn't try London on any terms.

"Dukes, knights, lords, earls—afternoon tea in the office—wipe your feet on the mat, please—one of the Empire's splendid sons when dividends ain't rolling in and the bankers want a war—blooming Botany Bay Colonial when the fighting's over! No, I've seen London. The king may have it! I wouldn't fight for the Empire again, not if they offered to give me the —— thing for my trouble!"

He spent the best part of two days trying to lure me to Australia, recounting the delights of "humping bluey," the romantic possibilities of pearling on shares, the carefree existence that a man might live trading cattle on the long drive down from the northern territories, and the fortunes to be made by "paddocking" in West Aus.

But that something—maybe intuition—that so many people offer to explain and no man understands, urged me elsewhere. I offered to share up with Jeremy whatever arrangement I could contrive with the men in London; but the notion seemed to be fixed in his head that making profits for any one outside Australia was treason.

I don't say he wasn't right. Nobody ever made it clear to me why international financiers should be allowed to weave empires on a basis of percentages for the fellows who do the work. But Jeremy couldn't, or wouldn't see a difference that looks clear to me between grub-staking a man on shares and criminal plutocracy. He said there was no such thing as fair play in financial circles outside Australia, and not even too much of it there.

Not that he was a socialist, or a communist, or any other kind of reformer. He could sum up his philosophy and politics in about ten words:

"If there's gold in a stream, and I can pan it, what in —— do I need a financier for? I'm the young feller that's going to finance any operations I'm engaged in."

I asked him what he proposed to do when he had made the pile he talked of hopefully; how would he invest it?

"I won't," he said, "I'll spend it. You wait and see!"

I don't carry my craving for independence all that far. I've made my little pile, and used the money of more than one financier to do it. The dollars are salted down in United States Government securities, and I figure now that the world will have to go to pieces before any man can crowd me to the wall. I'll tell you what happened to Jeremy presently; and although my method has worked so well for me, I'm still not sure that his hasn't suited him equally well. It's a matter of individuality, each man to his own affairs, of which there is a lot too little nowadays.

I said good-by to Jeremy in Rotterdam, where he took passage for Australia, glorying rebelliously in the steamer's foreign registry. He swore over the taffrail—I was going to say solemnly, but he never did anything that way—at the top of his lungs, at all events, that he would never sail again under the British flag, salute another British officer, set foot in England or pay taxes. He also gave me a specific message to deliver to the king, wished me well rid of my financiers, and begged me to get religion and come to Australia "where God rides horseback."

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The last I saw of him on that occasion he was performing on the bridge deck as the steamer swung into the tide, juggling with three opened, but not empty, beer bottles and as many tumblers, dancing to his own tune simultaneously. And the tune that he whistled was as free from care or any real malice as his own heart.

For a day or two I missed him sorely and wished I had gone with him. Then, as such things do happen in this rapid motion-picture world, he passed from mind in a new welter of business negotiations. My twin millionaires saw a chance in the prospect that I offered them; we signed up, and I went to Abyssinia, where I was able to pack up a decent competence and return them several hundred per cent on their outlay; which may be immoral, but is something I peculiarly like to do.

What with digging gold, and hunting elephants on the side, I don't believe I thought of Jeremy Ross more than once or twice during all the time I stayed in Abyssinia, a land whose riches are kept idle under a blanket of graft that gives you all you need to occupy your mind.

CHAPTER II

"Grim's a bird—you ought to meet Grim."

NOW skip a number of years. The end of 1913 found me still in Abyssinia endeavoring with varying success to protect my financiers' investment. But in January, 1916, I got out at last and headed down the Nile for Cairo, where, after a deal of arguing, the military let me have a room at one of the two big hotels.

Some of you don't need telling what those places were like in war-time. The Mount Nelson in Cape Town during the Boer War was a kindergarten to it. The notice at the front door, "Out of Bounds to all Enlisted Men," summed up the situation. You couldn't breathe for brass hats, or do a thing without being told you mustn't; and all the things you mustn't do were being done right and left by every one who had a relative at the War Office or a good-looking wife who entertained.

I tried for a while to horn in somewhere and be useful; but you couldn't get near Allenby or Lawrence or any man who was really responsible. The rest were willing to have you know that the ground whereon they stood was holy; in fact, you had to concede that point before they'd talk to you at all. Thereafter, whatever you wanted to know was an official secret, but you were usually allowed to pay for drinks.

It petered down finally to the alternative of going home, or taking a hand along with the Levantines in profiteer contracts for army supplies, which is a trade I don't take to readily. So I decided it wasn't my war, put my name down on the waiting list for a passage to the States, and waited. There are worse places to wait in, once you're definitely a spectator and don't care who cheats whom, or why. And while I waited I ran into Jeremy Ross again.

It was no surprize to see him once more in British uniform. Peter the Apostle set the example of protesting and then swallowing the protest. Jeremy erred in first-class company, and appeared to thrive on it. But he was sinning, too, against the army regulations, which is much worse, as well as likelier to bring instant punishment. Within ten paces of that notice by the hotel door, directly facing it, he, Jeremy Ross, a sergeant with the worsted chevrons on his sleeve, sat drinking whisky-and-soda at a table between two palms on the front veranda, in full view of any righteous personage who might pass.

It was scandalous, outrageous, subversive of all social order—more dangerous, I dare say, than trading with the enemy or spying for the other side. So I went and sat down on the chair in front of him, and ordered the Nubian waiter to charge the drinks to me, having a notion in the back of my head that for the second time I was going to steer Jeremy out of a scrape.

Well, glad to see me was no word for it. Some men blaze out like the sun from behind a cloud when they meet a friend, and Jeremy was one of them. He couldn't have made more noise if he had struck it lucky in the gold-fields of West Aus., where men don't celebrate in whispers; and he tried to tell me all his adventures since we parted in one long sentence. But he couldn't crowd it in or talk sense for high spirits.

He was perfectly sober and looked handsomer than ever in his broad-brimmed felt hat with the black cock's feather; moreover, he was as full as usual of disrespect for possible consequences and bubbling with amusement at the discomfort of one or two officers not far away, whose business it

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didn't happen to be to substitute for the provost marshal. They were as indignant as ruffled turkey-cocks, and I remarked on it.

"On edge, ain't they!" laughed Jeremy. "But we Australians have made a bit of a rep for ourselves. You'll notice none of them'll interfere until somebody comes who's big enough to give them —— for letting dirt like me sit in the sight of nabobs. Crikey! I could tell you tales about what's happened up there in Palestine when the staff tried to what they call discipline us chaps that would make you gasp. We've done most of the hard fighting; that's all right; that's what we're here for. But they haven't got us feeding out of their jeweled hands exactly. Listen to this."

And he told me tale after tale that never got into the papers about how the Australians had left their mark on the General Staff as well as on the Turks and Germans. Maybe he exaggerated, but I dare say not. I know what those fellows did and did not do in South Africa, and there were more of them on this occasion, farther from home and possessed of even less respect than formerly for swank, eye-wash and petty tyranny.

The inevitable happened at the end of half an hour. A staff-major came out of the hotel, who thought more of the line between enlistment and commission than of that great gulf reported to be fixed between heaven and the other place. He marched straight up and demanded to know what Jeremy thought he was doing there.

"He's my guest," I answered, before Jeremy could get a word in. "You can find out, if you care to, that whatever he has had to drink is charged to me."

But all that did was to include me in the class of undesirables. I was told I had sinned more grievously than Jeremy, and that I would be turned out of the hotel if I didn't mend my ways. He demanded my name. I offered to exchange cards, which he refused; so I advised him to mend his manners, if he thought that could be done without any risk to his health, and he went off in a towering rage in search of the provost marshal.

I was fully determined by that time to stick it out and see the affair through with Jeremy. It wouldn't have been the slightest use for either of us to clear out, for there was a provost sergeant watching us from over the way, who would simply have arrested Jeremy out of hand. I suppose the only reason why the staff-major hadn't ordered him to do that anyhow was his ambition to include me in the picnic, and any one less than a full-blown marshal with the correct stars on his shoulder and the proper badge might shake down a windfall of enforced apologies, and all that disagreeable kind of thing, for an assault on an American civilian.

And Jeremy was simply in his element. It was a long time before the provost marshal came, and he passed it calling full attention to his crime, laughing, chuckling, cracking jokes and describing for my benefit the comforts of the desert bull-pen out by the Pyramids, where he assured me I should be locked up along with him.

Then came one of those dusky magicians who produce day-old chickens out of a tarboosh on hotel verandas, and we watched him for about ten minutes, until Jeremy grew scornful of such amateurish stunts and elected to give the fellow a lesson. But it wasn't all professional pride; he wanted, too, to show me what a mastery he had of Arabic, which he must have learned in about a year in between terrific bouts of fighting.

"Picked it up, haven't I?" he said over his shoulder between one superb trick and the next. There were officers all around us now, ignoring military caste for the sake of being mystified. A subaltern brought the pool balls from the billiard table, and Jeremy made them crawl all over his arms as if they were bewitched; the Egyptian was pushed into the background, and slunk away disgruntled.

An officer came along with a fox-terrier; Jeremy took the dog on his knee—he has a way with animals that makes them instant friends and turned on his ventriloquism, making the pup give Arabic answers to his remarks in English.

"Wish Grim was here," he said to me, when he paused to swallow a drink and light a cigaret.

"Who's Grim?"

"One of you Yanks. First-class fellow. Working under Lawrence over in Arabia. I tried to get a transfer to his show—free and easy—independent—no airs—just the kind of job I like. Grim was willing, but nothing came of it; some brass hat got

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jealous, I suppose; nobody loves an Australian. If Grim was here now I'd show him a thing or two. He'd apply for me quick, and have his own way about it. Grim's a bird—quiet chap nearly all the time, but game to tell a full-blown general to go to —— as soon as look at him. You ought to meet Grim. Watch this."

But watching him was no use; you couldn't tell how he did it. He spun twenty coins of different sizes on the table and palmed the lot with one swipe of his hand. You could hear them click into place on top of one another, but half a second later when he opened his hand it was empty. It looked logical and easy after that when he produced them, with his other hand, out of the pup's mouth.

Then came the provost marshal, whose profession is to spoil sport and put the lid on entertainment. He had been brought away from an afternoon bridge-party, and was in a corresponding frame of mind—didn't know me—didn't want to know me—hadn't time to listen to me—ordered Jeremy under arrest at once—and threatened to arrest me in the bargain if I had any more to say.

So I saw a way to help Jeremy once more out of a military entanglement and said a great deal fervently. But I was careful what I said and the provost marshal wasn't. An officer in uniform, who has the law and regulations on his side, simply can't afford to be abusive to a civilian who isn't scared. There never was a military regulation yet devised that couldn't be off-set somehow, as the Belgians proved to Von Bissing.

He did exactly what I hoped he would do in the end—ordered me put out of the hotel, added one or two remarks about my nationality, called me a slacker because I wasn't in uniform, and strode away fuming.

Meanwhile, Jeremy had been marched off in disgrace, even so looking not at all dejected. His black cock's feather danced along jauntily, and even the provost sergeant couldn't keep the guard from laughing at his jokes.

"Try your Embassy again!" he shouted to me from the street.

But the U. S. doesn't keep an embassy in Cairo, and a consul-general has his limitations; our consul might have made it all right for me, but couldn't help Jeremy. Bankers are the boys, when they're your friends; and you can't live several years in Abyssinia, making money for other people, without being on good terms with a Cairo banker.

There was a man of millions, whose head office was in London, who had instructions from my financial twins to do anything he could for me at any time. I found him in his office, and the rest was easy, although it did take a day or two. He sent for my effects from the hotel and put me up in his private house at Ramleh, pending a settlement.

There was nothing that I wanted—not even an apology. The provost marshal hadn't gone an inch beyond his rights in having me turned out of the hotel; and as for bad language, I'm no school-girl; I've listened to a lot of it, and used some too. But—well, you know the difference between men, whose troubles are their own affair and serve 'em right, and the other sort, whose part you'll take whether they deserve punishment or not? I'd have stood by Jeremy if he'd committed murder.

The solution was all the easier because my banker acquaintance had social notions and didn't like that provost marshal's manners; and you may believe it or not, but when a war is on, and the army, and army contractors need money every day, he who deals in cash across the counter has more influence than any ten ambassadors.

THREE days after the incident I went down, armed with an official pass, to the Australian camp near the Pyramids to see Jeremy, and found him in a barbed-wire enclosure in the hot sun digging a nice square hole in the sand under the eyes of a sergeant-major.

They had reduced him to the ranks for absence without leave, but weren't content with that. A theory was being tried just then that drasticism was the only physic for Australians; so, for having dared to sit and drink in a hotel reserved for the higher caste, he was sentenced to dig ten holes, each to be exactly ten feet square and ten deep, in yielding sand and afterward fill them up again. He was still in the first hole when I found him; and because my pass expressly stated that I might talk to him alone the sergeant-major had to withdraw out of earshot.

Jeremy didn't say much at first. He smoothed the side of the hole with his shovel, grinned at me, patted another

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rough place, and presently expressed his judgment of the British Empire.

"I hope the Hottentots get London," he said. "I'd like to see an army of our Australian Aborigines looting the Bank of England. And the thing to do with the Royal Family is to put 'em in cages and send 'em on tour with the circus. The fall of Rome was a penny squib to what I hope happens to England, and I'd help any one except the Kaiser who had sense enough to take a crack at it. No use helping the Kaiser; he hasn't got guts; besides, if he won, he'd be worse, supposing that's possible. But to think I volunteered—just think of it! Me that belonged to the regiment that won the Boer War and took oath to see the whole British Empire into —— before we'd ever fight for that crowd again! But what's the use of talking? Wait till I get out of uniform, and see. That's all!"

I helped him out of the hole, gave him cigarets, and we sat down on the sand together, facing.

"How about that fellow Grim you told me about?" said I. "Would you care to join him?"

"Wouldn't I! Grim is for Feisul, and so am I. But it can't be done. They keep Australians for the fighting and fatigues. They're using Feisul the same way—ditch him soon as the war's won—wait and see."

"I can't get your rank restored," I said.

"Don't try," he answered. "I'd stuff the chevrons down the throat of the first British officer I met!"

"But I know a man who can get you transferred to Akaba under Grim," I went on.

"Then you're my enemy!"

"How so?"

"For not having done it already."

So I got his promise not to fall foul of any regulations, nor of any man—not even a sergeant-major until he should set foot in Arabia; and with that understanding I returned to my banker, who by that time had set three club committees by the ears and had cabled London and the U. S. A. Financiers don't stop short of taking pains when they pursue vendettas.

The cables weren't working very well, and it was another week—Jeremy had dug more than half his holes—before the General Staff began to realize my nuisance value. I received an official call from a major, who knew nothing of what had taken place, but supposed he could straighten the matter out over a couple of cigars. He began by saying he thought it very decent of me not to have complained to the consul-general.

But I followed the banker's instructions carefully and the major left with the impression that the least I wanted was the degradation of the provost marshal to the ranks, together with personal apologies from all concerned to almost everybody in America. The banker, who was present during the interview, dropped hints at intervals about my financial connections.

The General Staff was busy and worried, and in no mood to pause in its stride for the sake of a provost marshal's dignity. Somebody higher up told him sharply that he must straighten the tangle out himself at once, or take the consequences; so he took the only course left to him and sent one of his assistants to ask for an appointment for his chief.

On the banker's advice, I wasn't in. But the door was open between the two rooms; the banker did the talking and I listened.

"You know what these Americans are—pig-headed men. Once they're set on a course they're hard to turn. This man is a pretty good fellow, but he's no man's fool to be pacified with a perfunctory apology."

"What does he want, then? Does he expect the provost to walk here on foot with peas in his boots and call out *Peccavi* through the back door? He's crazy if he expects a man like Colonel Gootch to come and grovel to him."

"I don't think it would amuse him in the least to see anybody grovel."

"Well, what *does* he want?"

"An apology, of course. He was publicly insulted; he's entitled to an apology in public, and as a guest in my house I'd expect him to demand at least that. But he wants more. As a practical man he demands some practical proof of regret and of willingness to make amends."

"Good Lord! You mean money?"

"Of course I don't, nor does he. You know better than that. At the time of the insult he had an Australian with him—Sergeant Jeremy Ross by name—an old friend whom he'd met that afternoon for the first time in ten years. It seems the Australian was the cause of all the trouble—out of bounds at my friend's invitation in a

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place reserved for officers. The Australian was very severely punished as well as reduced to the ranks, and my friend feels badly about it."

"Good ——! D'you mean he expects Gootch to go and kiss the sergeant on both cheeks and beg his pardon?"

"Hardly! But you may tell Provost Marshal Gootch privately from me that if he cared to arrange that Australian's transfer to Akaba for special duty under Captain Grim, there's no doubt I could persuade my friend to accept an apology in this room and let the whole matter drop."

"But Colonel Gootch hasn't anything to do with transfers."

"He has influence. Let him use it. You'd better make it clear to Colonel Gootch that he'll have me to deal with unless he does the right thing pretty quickly. I have business at headquarters tomorrow noon. It might be best for all concerned if I could say at that time that the air is clear again. I've heard of bigger men than Gootch being transferred to less agreeable duties."

"Well, I'll tell him."

"Put it bluntly, will you? Tell him you talked with me."

Gootch understood the situation and got busy. Napoleon may have told the truth about the British in that famous remark of his; maybe he spoke collectively; but I can certify that one high-handed colonel, at all events, knew when he was beaten. Jeremy was excused from digging holes that afternoon, and his transfer to Akaba was arranged the same evening.

The apology to me, too, left nothing to be desired; it began by being stiff and throaty, but ended in armchairs with whisky-and-soda. In fact, I rather think Gootch and I were on good terms before he left; it was his suggestion that I might like to travel with Jeremy as far as Port Said, and he provided me a pass that came pretty near to being the key of Egypt.

So I traveled in a troop-train through a hot night, listening to Jeremy's accounts of all that had happened to him in the years between. It seemed he had even been a police-court magistrate, and had done almost everything else from trading horses down to conjuring in small towns with a traveling vaudeville troupe.

But he thought that none of the things that he had done were half as inexplicably marvelous as my getting him that transfer for special duty under James Schuyler Grim the American, and he swore friendship forever on the strength of it.

This time he waved good-by with his cock's-plume hat from the deck of a decrepit tug in the Suez Canal, and his last words were of jubilantly roared advice to me to get attached to Grim's command in some way.

"Grim's the real thing," he shouted. "Come along and see life!"

At the last glimpse I had he was dancing on the tug's poop, laughing and making friends with every one on board.

He had promised to write, but of course he didn't, and the letters I wrote to him were all returned eventually marked "undelivered for reason stated." The fact that the reason wasn't stated hardly shed much light on Jeremy's career.

However, I received news of him almost simultaneously with those undelivered but carefully censored returned letters of mine. My banker friend in Cairo wrote to me after I got back to the States, enclosing a clipping from an official list of casualties. It read:

Trooper Jeremy Wallace Ross. —th Australian Light Horse. On special duty Akaba. Missing.

I wrote in vain for further details. Nothing seemed to be known about him, and although the authorities were courteous and apparently took great pains to find out for me, "presumably dead" was the final official verdict. So I wished I hadn't engineered his transfer to Akaba, and more or less forgot him once again.

CHAPTER III

"Protection looks best from a long way off."

NOW skip several more years. Mastery of time and space is the prerogative of him who tells tales, and possibly has something to do with the reader's contentment. In what is called real life the days are steps of a tedious stair, up which we climb unhandily enough with never a chance to take ten dozen in a stride during the monotonous interludes when nothing seems to happen. Even when we fall instead of climbing we must bump down one day at a time, with the bottom everlastingly receding as discomfort grows. For nothing I ever read, or heard, or saw convinced me

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that there is top or bottom; we just go on forever, either way, one step at a time.

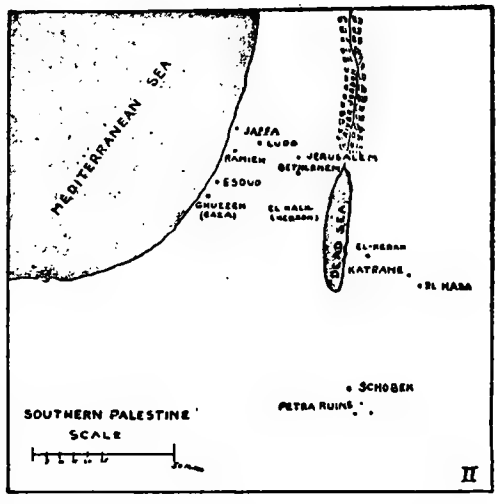
But in a story you can leave out the uninteresting parts, and omit mention of the people who crowd the steps uncomfortably. The whole world's history, and the gamut of human cussedness go to the making of every incident and give biologists a deal of material to keep them busy. But we, who for our peace of mind are not biologists or dry-as-dust historians, may sum up every situation in five monosyllables—So it came to pass.

It came to pass, then, that in 1920 I was back in the Near East—in Jerusalem, to be exact—not at a loose end, nor on a lost trail, but venturing more or less at random for an opportunity. Being independent and in the prime of life—which is the present moment in which every healthy fellow finds himself and has nothing to do with middle age—I was in position to engage in any pursuit that interested me.

I like to see the fruit of my labor in the form of invested dollars. I think a man is a fool who doesn't salt down more than half of what he earns; but no man is entitled to an opinion who lacks the courage of it. I've been called more than my share of hard names by men who describe themselves as generous, but I shan't have to tax their generosity when old age comes, because I have made it a rule to reckon costs up in advance and never to engage in anything until I can see which side the bread is buttered on. You might call me a cautious man, and in one sense conservative.

Nevertheless, I have had my full share of fun and look forward to plenty more; and the reason of that is as simple as addition. I have never looked for money merely for the sake of getting money. The game has got to interest me first; and I've discovered this: That when you're really interested you can start a good game anywhere. The fact that you are interested opens doors.

So, although Jerusalem looks at the first glance like a strange choice for a professional prospector as a jumping-off-place into the unknown; and although it certainly would be the worst place imaginable for a man dependent on his earnings from month to month, with its prodigious interest as a maelstrom of human emotions fixed in the centre of the habitable surface of the world, within a day's ride of the unknown in more than one direction, it suited my case perfectly.



Where all the tribes, all the politics, most of the creeds and a generous sprinkling of cranks foregather, there the tales blow like blossom in the wind. Blossom that sticks begets fruit; even blown blossom had to have a tree to grow on, and you can find the tree if you look long enough. In other words, most tales are worth investigating for the truth that underlies them; and if you want one tale a minute, each wilder than the last, just try Jerusalem for a month or two.

And as I have already told, it was in Jerusalem that I at last met the James Schuyler Grim who Jeremy had said was such a first-class fellow. Lawrence, who did more than any living man to defeat the Turks, by composing Arab differences and swinging the Arabs into line behind Feisul to fight on Allenby's right wing, had returned to England long ago. Most of the quiet handful who achieved impossibilities for Lawrence's sake had followed him into retirement or scattered over the earth to new fields of activity. But Grim stayed on in the Intelligence Department, and I have told several adventures that I had with him.

Grim isn't a man whom you would normally expect to lead you on to fortune—nor to fame; for he appears to find his meagre pay sufficient, and isn't even keen enough on that to cling to his job unless the British let him have his own way. And publicity offends him like a bad smell. He had to know me intimately for months, and I had to make him all kinds of promises, before he gave me permission to lay bare some of his doings.

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And I don't mean by that that he is modest in the usual meaning of the word; for he isn't. He knows his own value and pits himself with confidence against odds and in situations that would make his seniors in the service gasp. But he is a man of one idea; and as well as I can describe it in a sentence it consists in using his own extraordinary ability to the utmost. What he knows is Arabia, Syria, Egypt and Arabs.

What he can do is to understand the Arab and bring out his good qualities. What he thinks is that Feisul, third son of the King of Mecca, who, for the first time since Saladin, united the Arabs under one banner in one cause, should be allowed to work out some form of independent Arab government. What he does is to devote his whole energy along that line, making use of his commission in the British army because it gives him authority and funds.

Mind you, he earns the money that the British pay him; and, seeing that he is an American, with no real claim to their consideration since peace was signed, it isn't likely they would continue him in the service unless they were sure they had their money's worth. I found him as Jeremy described, a man "game at any time to tell a full-blown general to go to ——," and the convenience must therefore be considered mutual; the British pay Grim because he is useful to them; he accepts their pay, and wears their uniform at times, because that is the line of least resistance to the furtherance of the cause he has at heart.

Most people like him, although some officials are jealous of his ability and of the scope that he enjoys in consequence; for he goes just where and when he chooses as a rule, which makes his lot considerably pleasanter than that of the routine men tied down to stuffy quarters in Jerusalem, Nablus, Haifa and such posts.

Most criminals like him, for though he frustrates their more important schemes with an ingenuity that must seem almost supernatural to them, he is never vindictive. The crowded jail in Jerusalem is full of Grim's friends and the toughest rogues of the Near East are his best assistants; for if ever a man took others as he found them, discovered the best in each, and bent it to the cause he has espoused, that man is Grim.

I remember how in my callow days I couldn't sit down at ease with men possessed of a different notion of morality from mine. Nowadays, on the rare occasions when I lie awake, I spend the time laughing at the superior airs of that aspiring young moralist who once on a time was me. Contact with the earth's ends soon kicks out of you, of course, ninety per cent. of your puppyhood; but a modicum remains that varies with the individual, and it needed Grim to teach me that a murderer, for instance, isn't necessarily a bit worse than a politician, nor either of them so much worse than you and me that you could measure the difference with a micrometer.

In Grim's company I have spent days in the intimate society of professional thieves, to whom murder was a side-line of the business, and I reckon I'm the better for it; for Grim has the faculty of bringing out what makes the world such an amazing place—the infinite capacity possessed by every rascal for doing the decent thing deliberately.

Haven't you seen men who can take ill-broken horses and drive them all day long without a kick or an accident, because of sympathy and understanding without a weak spot in it? That best describes Grim's way. There isn't any mush in him. Slushy sentiment won't manage men when a crisis comes any more than petting will control stampeding cattle.

He looks facts in the face without wincing, and where whip, rein and voice are called for he can use them; but, though I have been in more than a score of uncommonly tight places along with Grim, I have never once heard him make an ill-considered threat, or seen him weak for a second when firmness was the cue.

The truth is, he can read the hearts of men, which is the only book worth reading in the long run, although there are some printed ones that help you to understand; it is full from end to end of unexpected wonders, and those cynics who assert that man's nature is predominantly evil are ignorant fools, who lie.

And, as I have said, Grim hates publicity. He even hates to air his views, or to discuss information before the minute comes for using it. That makes him a rather disconcerting man to get along with, for he springs things on you when you least expect, and keeps you in the dark at times when you would give ten years of your life for the certainty of living ten more minutes. I

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think he is obsessed by the unusual belief that to share his thoughts lessens their fertility; and I know he regards all propaganda as a foolish and indecent waste of time.

So the mere fact that he doesn't answer, or shakes his head, or looks bored, or says he doesn't know, doesn't prove much. I remember asking him, not long after I first met him in Jerusalem, for some account of Jeremy's doings in Arabia and of how the merry fellow lost the number of his mess.

To my surprize Grim denied all knowledge of him, although not by any means convincingly. He didn't seem to try to be convincing. He looked up from the book he was reading and stared at me for about thirty seconds with those baffling eyes of his that now and then gleam so brilliantly under the bushy eyebrows that they almost seem on fire. He had been smiling at something he had just read, but now his lips set noncommittally in a straight line.

"Why? What do you know of him?" he asked.

It struck me at once as improbable that Jeremy had never mentioned me to Grim, seeing that I had been instrumental in bringing the two together in Akaba. However, it isn't always good manners to make a display of incredulity, and there isn't a set of circumstances anywhere, nor ever was, in which bad manners are less than a mistake. So I took the question at its face value and told all I knew about Jeremy from the beginning.

Grim closed his book and listened with apparently deep interest, never interrupting once. Not one least gesture betrayed previous knowledge of the Australian; and although he smiled once or twice at the accounts of Jeremy's misdeeds, it wasn't with any air of being familiar with them. All the same, I still wasn't convinced.

"I can't tell you a thing about him," he said at last, when I had come to the end of my tale and waited for Grim to make a remark of some sort. Then he resumed his reading, holding the book so that I could no longer see his face, which may have been an accident but left me less convinced than ever.

I formed the conclusion that my friend Jeremy Ross must have done something discreditable, which Grim preferred to leave undiscussed, that it might be forgotten the sooner. Strange, isn't it, how we jump to the worst conclusions and associate all silence with unpleasantness? Since that was my judgment of the situation, decency obliged me to keep silence too—that and a discreditable, although not unique desire to dissociate myself from the record of a man who appeared to have failed in the last pinch. That's another strange thing, isn't it, how decency and despicable motives run in double harness!

There were plenty of incidents after that, when I ventured with Grim and his following of born thieves into the trans-Jordan country, which brought Jeremy to mind again; but I kept my thoughts to myself and never once referred to him.

Nevertheless, the more I learned of the amazing story of what Lawrence and his handful did in the war, with another handful of untrumpeted zealots toiling in their rear, the less I liked to remain ignorant of Jeremy's share in the doings. And the more I turned over in mind what I did know of Jeremy, the less probable it seemed that what I did not know could be much to his discredit.

Wild he was certainly, and free with his opinions about men and circumstances that he did not like; but it seemed increasingly incredible that Jeremy, wearing the uniform of a free man who had volunteered for foreign service, would do anything meriting the name of treason.

In my experience, free-speaking men of courage are less likely to betray their flag than are some of the patrioteers, who wave their hats in air when the flag goes by, but would sell it, and throw their country in, for less than Esau took in exchange for his birthright.

Neither was Jeremy Ross a likely plunderer. There are loose-ended men, of course, who constitutionally can't let alone such opportunities for pouching money as unguarded army supplies provide. But Jeremy was one of those fellows who could make money easily without stooping to dishonesty. In fact, it was bellicose honesty in harness with boisterous humor that made him rail at shams and got him so often into trouble. That kind of fellow doesn't steal.

The only plausible supposition left, then, was the oldest in the world. Jeremy was a handsome man with a little dark mustache that turned naturally upward and made you think of d'Artagnan. He had

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eyes and a smile, free shoulders and a horseman's supple loins, that together with his bubbling spirits might easily have stirred the ambition of a desert-born Delilah.

There are women in all lands who are like spiders, not content to play the vampire game, but only satisfied when they have lured, bled white and finally destroyed. Moslem countries are the last in which a wise man would run that kind of risk; but Jeremy Ross—clever, brilliant, alert, courageous—was not nearly always wise. A woman seemed the likeliest guess; but that only added to my desire to learn all the facts.

Patience, however, is my long suit. I have had to acquire that quality, for lack of some of those more marketable talents with which men born under other stars than mine seem to attain to what they want so easily. I take it that patience had quite a lot to do with Grim's selection of me to go with him on expeditions, for I have no strategic or diplomatic genius. True, he had my services for nothing, and that is quite a consideration when you remember how poor the governments are in these days, so that all the unspectacular, unpopular departments must have their expense sheets pared to the bone.

It is also true that hard knocks and harder work in all kinds of out-of-the-way places have made me in a sort of way dependable. I have been let down too badly and too often by men who called themselves assistants, to care to submit another fellow to that sort of mortification.

I can talk Hindustani pretty well, and my skin has been burned a sort of raw mahogany color by sun and wind and sea, which makes it comparatively easy for me to pose as an Indian Moslem in places where Indians are well known by repute but rather rare. And I have learned enough Arabic to understand the drift of things, and to hold up my end in any argument.

But Grim, who can act the part of an Arab so perfectly as to deceive the most suspicious of them—and there isn't a more swiftly suspicious race under heaven—could have found dozens of men who understood the Arabs better, and who could disguise themselves and act their parts better than I.

Grim is really a long-headed, imaginative business man in a peculiar environment. Even in his major's uniform he looks the part. In civilian clothes you couldn't possibly mistake him. He is one of those men for whom the Napoleons of commerce hunt ceaselessly, and to whom, when discovered, they pay whatever salary the find considers himself worth.

For make no mistake about it, nine-tenths of the art of making millions lies in knowing a born executive when you see him in the raw. And again, nine-tenths of an executive's worth consists in knowing men. Grim knows all about men. He has a genius for judging just how far a given individual will go in certain circumstances. He understands how far to trust, and just when to mistrust.

And, greatest art of all, he knows how to cajole a notoriously dishonest fellow into playing straight, as well as how to forestall the vastly more difficult customers who practise knavery under the cloak of a good reputation.

So I claim it is a feather in my cap that Grim made a friend of me, and invited me to share his quarters in Jerusalem in the funny little stone house down an alley at the back of the Zionist hospital. As his friend I must count myself among a score or two of cutthroats, some of whom are in the jail this minute, and two of whom they tell me are now under sentence to be hanged.

But I don't find the association unendurable. In fact, the meannesses of what is called polite society, where men and women commit their crimes by proxy, bore me rather soon, and I'm minded to go back and meet some of those honest thieves and murderers again. I like things and people labeled with their proper names.

We didn't use Grim's quarters for many days on end, for the Administration wasn't paying him to sit down and grow fat. One expedition followed another with the swiftness and almost the regularity of a motion-picture serial, and between times, when Grim wasn't reading, there was a constant succession of visitors, who brought in scraps of information from zones not reached by rail or telegraph.

We had almost daily news of Mustapha Kemal in Anatolia. Now and then there were tales of the Bolsheviki in northern Persia, and once when I was present a hairy, swarthy, smelly fellow brought information from as far away as Samarkand. The spies who reported at headquarters on the Mount of Olives were usually sent along to

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Grim to repeat their story to him personally, so that before you had been in his company a week you felt as if you were posted in the center of a great map, with all the roads, tracks, wires and rivers radiating outward from you.

Few of the visitors knew how to behave in so-called civilized surroundings, and most of them when offered a seat preferred a mat or a cushion on the floor. Your progressive Arab likes to air what he thinks are occidental manners, but the men familiar with deserts can't disgorge their news unless you let them sit at ease in their accustomed way.

By constant repetition one peculiarity became remarkable—the farther away the place from which any of our visitors came, the more insistent that man would be that Grim should return with him to help straighten matters out.

I don't think that meant that Grim's fame had reached all the way to Samarkand, for instance. His Arab name, Jimgrim, can be conjured with throughout northern Arabia and Syria, but hardly beyond that; and at any rate he put a totally different construction on the circumstance.

"You see?" he laughed one afternoon. "When they're not familiar with western methods and only know of them by hearsay, they're crazy to call us in. But the folk near by, who've had a dose or two of our enlightenment, would rather be let alone in future. Notice it? The stories from fifty or a hundred miles away are mostly given one kind of twist calculated to calm the Administration's nerves; from beyond that the twist is exactly reversed. European protection looks best from a long way off. Well, I'm dead set against outside interference. If I could have my way, there'd be no meddling in foreign lands. Each to his own affairs is my creed."

But, like the rest of us, Grim can't have his own way very often and has to be content with compromise.

ONE afternoon, about a month after our return from the affair with Ali Higg at Petra,* there came a man on camel-back, followed and noisily rebuked by a couple of mounted policemen, who insisted that he should report himself and his business first at police headquarters. But he had no use for the police, and was much too wise to stop and argue, or to draw his weapons and give them an excuse to call assistance and arrest him. He knew the way to Grim's quarters and sent his camel along at top speed, stone-deaf to shouts, threats, commands and all abuse.

He dismounted at the narrow stone gateway without making his camel kneel, and leaving the beast for the police to watch strode straight in unannounced, brushing aside the servant who ran to the door to question him.

Grim and I happened to be playing chess, with the board between us on a stool in front of the fireplace. The man stood watching us in silence for two or three minutes, patient now that he had reached his goal, and Grim didn't appear to notice him, although the smell of human and camel sweat blended and the fellow's heavy breathing were remarkable, to state it mildly.

It was five minutes before the Arab saw fit to interrupt.

"*Salaam aleikum, ya* Jimgrim!" he said at last. "That game you play there is a slow one. I have brought you word across the desert of a swift one that a man must play between life and death. Ben Saoud summons you!"

CHAPTER IV

"In the name of Him Who never sleeps it is a bargain!"

OUR visitor was tall as well as smelly, and he smelt of other things besides sweat—the desert, for instance, which, like the salt sea, has its own aroma. It makes some folk afraid before they are conscious of what frightens them, filling others with a vague restlessness.

All smells are certainly to be included in that new elusive law of relativity. Grim and I, freshly tubbed, in a clean-swept room, were more offensive to that Bedouin than he to us. He had cotton stuffed in his nostrils, an habitual indignity the desert people offer to the cities on the rare occasions when they leave behind the safety of all outdoors and contemptuously tread the peril-haunted streets.

There was nothing about our quarters that he enjoyed. He stood with his big brown eyes wide open, not distrustful, for he knew Grim, but about as alert as a horse just in off the range, turning his head an

*"The Lion of Petra," March 20th issue, 1922.

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inch at a time to examine every detail of the furniture. Grim told him to sit down, and he chose the rug in the center of the floor, gathering his brown cloak about him and arranging its folds as if to protect himself from unseen evil.

"How did you get as far as this without surrendering your rifle?" Grim asked him.

"By ——, Jimgrim, it was either that or not at all. If I had come by way of El-Kerak and taken the bridge over the Jordan the Sikhs on watch there would have been too many for me. They would have required it according to custom."

"They would have given you a receipt," said Grim. "You could have had it back on your return."

"Maybe. A rifle is a man's life. Who leaves his life in a stranger's keeping, against words on a scrap of paper in a foreign speech? I came by the south end of the Dead Sea, avoiding Sikhs and such folk. At El-Kalil there was an officer—an Englishman—a young cock-sparrow full of mirth and brains, who bade me give my rifle up. But I gave him talk instead of it. 'In the name of Allah the Omnipotent,' said I, 'you shall fight me for the rifle if you want it. I killed a German for it in the war; now it is mine until another man kills me. Maybe thou art the man,' said I, 'although I think not.' "

"That would be Captain de Crespigny, I dare say?" Grim suggested, smiling.

"Aye, that was the youngster's name. A straight-standing child with a smooth face. *Mashallah!* He told me he is Governor of El-Kalil! Did he lie?"

"Not he. What did he answer you about the rifle?"

"He laughed, and said it would be a shame to kill such a specimen as me. Whereat I started on my way again, but he called me back and wrote out a permission, lest, as he said, I should slay all the soldiers in Jerusalem."

"Did you show the permit to the police here?" Grim asked him.

"By ——, not I! I let the dogs bay after me! What I have in my pouch is my affair. Who has permission from the Governor of El-Kalil needs no favors from lesser folk; and besides, he might not have been the governor after all. Who am I to stop and trade curses with policemen?"

"Let's see what de Crespigny wrote," said Grim.

The Bedouin reached into the mysterious recesses of an under-garment and produced a greasy, thumb-marked sheet torn from a memorandum book. It was folded criss-cross fashion, and addressed in pencil to Grim. Grim read it, smiled, and passed it on to me. It ran:

DEAR GRIM, this fellow Aroun, of the Saoud clan, swears he is a friend of yours. I rather hope it's true. I like him. But if he's a liar, send him back this way, and I'll have some fun with him in the jail here. Yours, C. DE CRESPIGNY.

Grim handed the note back to its bearer, who pouched it proudly. It has probably done yeoman service since in the heart of Arabia, displayed to folk who can't read as proof conclusive of any wild statement its owner cares to make.

"Well, what message do you bring?" Grim asked him.

"Hassan ben Saoud says you are to come to him."

"To what place? When?"

"Now, at once, to Abu Kem, which is two days' camel-ride to the south and east of Abu Lissan. He said, 'Tell Jimgrim to do no dallying but come at once.' "

Grim crossed one leg over the other and leaned back in his armchair lazily.

"In a hurry, is he? What's the trouble?"

"He said: 'No need to tell the nature of the trouble. Let it be enough that there *is* trouble. Jimgrim interfered between me and Ali Higg of Petra. By a trick he came between me and sure victory. I had pledged my word, and I kept my word. Now let Jimgrim keep his word to me. He promised to come and help me at my call. It should therefore be enough to say that Hassan ben Saoud the Avenger summons him. If he doesn't answer that, let him go the way of all dogs and I will do without him. But I think he is not a dog, and will answer the summons.' So spake Saoud the Avenger, and I rode a seven days' journey to repeat his words."

"Don't you know what the difficulty is?" asked Grim.

"*Wallahi!* That I do!"

"Is it a secret?"

"As secret as the devil's hiding-place! Some say that King Solomon has come back to earth and has the witches working for him. Others say that the devil in person has made his abode in Arabia. There has been a comet, and the great well at Abu Kem has run dry."

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"I can't catch comets in a net, or fix dry wells," said Grim. "Witches are none of my business either. I wouldn't know how to deal with the devil, and as for King Solomon, I guess as much of him as isn't dead is hard to find. You'll have to tell me a plainer tale than that, my friend."

"But ben Saoud the Avenger has your promise. What is the word of Jimgrim worth, then?"

"I didn't promise ben Saoud to do exactly what he said at any time. He demanded that, and I refused. What I did promise was to help him in my own way, if he should get into difficulty. You've got to tell me what the difficulty is."

"By Allah, not so! When I call my camel he must come."

"I am no man's camel," answered Grim. "If a man owes me money and I demand it, he must pay. I am not required to tell him what I need the money for."

"Does ben Saoud realize what it means for me to get men together and make that journey? Is he so hard pressed that he feels entitled to put me to all that expense and inconvenience?"

"By Allah, Jimgrim, you know me," our visitor answered. "You know I am the Avenger's trusted man. You hear my words. You hear me say I speak for the Avenger. You hear me say he needs you. You made the Avenger a promise. Keep it!"

"I intend to," Grim answered.

"*Taib.*"

"But answer this: Which would likely be of most use, a friend with his eyes shut, or a friend who can see all sides of a matter and so make preparation in advance?"

"A friend is a friend, Jimgrim."

"True; and a rifle is a rifle, but some shoot straight and others don't. Suppose the rifle is supplied with cartridges that don't fit?"

"Well; this is a matter of life and death. Come well armed and supplied. Bring machine guns and six regiments if you have them," said our visitor.

Grim laughed aloud at that, and clapped his hands for the servant to bring coffee.

"You fellows believe in just one solution for all problems, don't you!" he said.

"True, Jimgrim. It is the law of Allah that death solves everything. A man is righteous; he dies, and enters paradise; shall he complain? A man does evil; he is slain and hurled into Jehannum; the survivors have his goods, and Allah smiles. Without death in the reckoning all would be talk and no solution. A good rifle and a sharp sword are Allah's arbiters."

The coffee came, and we drank it in comparative silence. The snorts and lip-smacking of our visitor were intended for a complement—an echo, as it were, of inward ecstacy, not to be confounded with mere noise.

"Are you fit to travel?" Grim asked at last.

"*Inshallah*, I would like to go tonight, but my camel is exhausted."

"I can lend you another camel. We'll give your beast a day's rest, and I'll bring it along after you. You'll start back at moonrise?"

"By your honor's favor."

"Then tell ben Saoud the Avenger this: I'm coming at once, because of the promise. If he needs help badly, I'll do my best."

"God give your honor long life!"

"But it is neither simple nor convenient just now for me to come. If I find that the Avenger has sent for me without good reason, not only will my promise be wiped out, but the balance will swing heavily the other way. Will you tell him that?"

"If I live."

"I shall start tomorrow night. If on second thought the Avenger decides he can do without me, let him send back a messenger to meet me on the road. In that case, well and good; I will turn aside to important business, and no harm will have been done. But unless such a messenger meets me, I will go forward, and the Avenger will have hard work to make his peace with me afterwards, if this should prove to be false alarm."

"Better write all that in a letter, Jimgrim."

"Why? The Avenger sent his message by word of mouth to me."

"But if I should die on the road, or be made prisoner?"

"In that case a letter would certainly fall into wrong hands. No. If there is to be any writing, the Avenger shall do it over his seal and signature at my dictation."

"By Allah and His Prophet, these are words at random anyhow!" said our visitor. "The affair is serious, as you shall see. The Avenger believes you are the only man capable of understanding, to say nothing of solving it. He holds you to your promise,

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but he is no ingrate. Show him the way out of this, and you may name your own terms afterwards."

"Trust me, I will!" Grim answered dourly.

"He who keeps promises shall find that promises are kept," said the Bedouin sententiously.

SO, BY a bolt from the blue, as it were, our activities were outlined for the next three weeks. All Grim's immediate plans were swept into the discard, and we began there and then the always exhilarating business of preparing for a fresh campaign. There isn't any greater fun on earth than that, whatever the subsequent outcome. I believe that wars are made more often than not by the fun men have in getting ready for them; and the misery of the last is straightway forgotten in the sport of preparation for the next.

Lord knows, I've had as much trouble in wild lands as most men of my age, but I'm as thrilled as the greenest tenderfoot at the sight of blankets being rolled, tents made ready, and, above all, saddles. Saddles and sails—the day has not yet come when gasolene or steam can quite replace them; they are rather more than symbols in the desert of this latter-day efficiency, and their lure has the old heart-tug in it. And camel-saddles are the best of all.

Nevertheless, the trappings are as nothing compared to the men who shall use them. Given good men, you can campaign on a shoe-string, and the worst of starting in a hurry is the risk of taking with you handsome fellows who will lie down in a pinch, and quarrel over trifles twenty leagues from home.

That was where Grim enjoyed his great advantage. He was under no necessity to employ the alleged efficient hirelings, who make nightmares of most journeys in that country. The absurd delusion that a jail-sentence unfits a man for official jobs obsesses governments, so the men who ought to be in jail get government employment and the fellows who have learned by sharp experience that off-side isn't in the game are left off-side without a chance to put their schooling to fair use.

But, being on short allowance for expenses, Grim was not only permitted, but encouraged to pick his men from among the reputed undesirables. The widows of the riffraff don't draw pensions, and there aren't any union rates of pay; but the riff-raff, if you want to call them that, are usually grateful for small mercies.

The same rule applies, with obvious exceptions, to enlisted men. It isn't always wise to choose the men who know the inside of the regimental clink, but some men with scandalous defaulter sheets are rebels against monotony rather than against discipline, and what such fellows hunger for is interesting work.

The first man Grim sent for was Narayan Singh, our Sikh friend, who had been with us on one or two adventures—the best man in his regiment by almost any way of reckoning but, as it happened, in disgrace—and in the cells—just then.

There wasn't anything they could have done but put him in the cells. The cantonment life had bored him badly after our last trip, and the hooch they sell in the out-of-bounds slums of Palestine works miracles with the sign reversed. As a rule when he is drunk he likes to parade without his pants, but on this occasion he had turned up stark naked on the drill-ground and, being a man of muscle and adroitness, had provided ten men and a sergeant with an hour's strenuous work catching him and putting him in irons.

Good soldiers, like good workmen at any trade, possess friends in high places and corresponding advantages unguessed by the ranks of mere malingerers. A telephone message to Narayan Singh's colonel relieved more individuals than one; you could almost feel over the wire the satisfaction with which Goodenough agreed to continue the Sikh's "punishment"—to make a horrible example of him, in fact—by ordering him out of cells at once and away on special service under Grim.

I am told that not a man in the regiment smiled next morning when the order was made known. There are people—Sikhs among them—who can enjoy a joke without disturbing the conventions.

Narayan Singh arrived that evening, resplendent in a brand-new khaki uniform, for which his pay would probably be docked for months to come. His beard was oiled and curled; his dark eyes had already lost the dissipated glare that goes with drunkenness; and somewhere in the middle of the black hair was a streak of flashing white

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teeth that showed first as he loomed enormous in the doorway of our sitting-room with the night behind him.

Not a word of explanation or excuses. Grim and he understood each other. Narayan Singh saluted, Grim nodded, and there all ceremony ceased.

"We're going back of Abu Lissan, Narayan Singh."

"Wherever you say, *sahib*."

"It's a blind affair. No knowing what's in the wind."

"So long as the affair is blind, and not we, let the wind blow how it will, *bahadur*. Who else goes?"

"We'll take the old gang."

"Better so. Old dogs hunt best."

"Suppose you get away to El-Kalil tonight. Take a Ford car, and have the driver hurry. Call at the governorate first; then roust out Ali Baba in the suk* and tell him to get ready to start tomorrow with his sixteen sons. If any of the sons are away, or can't be spared, or happen to be in jail on serious charges, tell Ali Baba to find substitutes. But if any of them are in jail for a minor offense, ask Captain de Crespigny to release them. You can't travel as a Sikh beyond El-Kalil; dress as a Pathan; here's money; account to me for it. That's all, I think."

There was something else, though. Narayan Singh stood without speaking, motionless, like a great meek simpleton—he who is neither meek nor simple in any circumstance. He was technically still a prisoner, and his rifle and bayonet were locked away until such time as Grim should report his sentence served. It was beneath his dignity to refer to the matter, yet a dog without teeth would be happier than that Sikh without weapons.

It was about a minute before Grim understood the situation.

"Hadn't you better go for that car?" he said.

But Narayan Singh continued to stand in silence.

"You don't need a note from me. The driver knows you. Just jump in the car and tell him where to go."

But the Sikh's expression remained wooden, and Grim looked puzzled. The world was more likely to come to an end from surfeit of morals than that Narayan Singh would balk at active service and responsibility. But an almost unnoticeable gesture of helplessness—a relaxing of the muscles of arms and shoulders—provided the clue, and Grim sat down at his desk to write a note to the Governor of El-Kalil.

"Give that to Captain de Crespigny, and he'll let you pick over the governorate armory. I don't suppose what he's got there is any good, but you'll have to manage."

The Sikh grinned contentedly, saluted and was gone. Until midnight we two overhauled old maps, Grim's old notebooks, pistols, kit and what not, and we were about to turn in when the same Ford car that had taken Narayan Singh came to a clattering, tooting halt outside the gate, and some one began pounding on the front door.

WE WERE used to midnight messengers, for Grim's business works day and night. It was likely enough some scaremonger who had begged a ride on the strength of wild tales of a rising somewhere. Grim went to the door with his face set ready to cut short the interview, but a moment later ushered into the sitting room no less a personage than Ali Baba, father and grandfather of the sixteen thieves of El-Kalil.

Now what is it that makes a nod of confidential recognition from such a man seem more like balm in Gilead than the smile of a proconsul? Ali Baba was a thief, and the proud progenitor of thieves. I don't suppose there is a species of raw rascality that he and his have not been intimately connected with at some stage of their careers; and the last time I had anything to do with the old villain he stole my good repeating pistol, and made a song about it, which he and his sons sang repeatedly thereafter in my presence, it being part of their creed that no theft is really profitable or amusing unless the victim knows who perpetrated it.

I should say you couldn't find a more disreputable character than Ali Baba in the whole of the Near East—and mind you, that is a broad statement—yet the old man's nod to me was like the handshake of a friend.

Well, I didn't make the world. I'm telling facts, not trying to explain things.

Ali Baba was perturbed. His gray beard bristled with excitement, and his dark eyes shone with nervousness. As he sat down cross-legged on the couch his wrinkled hands twitched; and though he normally looks

*Bazaar.

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bland and respectable enough to be custodian of a saint's tomb, there was an air about him now of impotent rascality caught napping. He wasn't exactly in a rage, but he was ready to blow up at the first excuse, and his right and left hand went in turns to the dagger stuck in his waist-cloth.

But after he had sat down he went through all the long formality of Arab greeting, first to Grim, and then all over again to me—question and reply—question and reply—all about our health, the state of our bowels, glory be to Allah the condition of his own inside—the weather—the crops—the price of camel-feed—then, suddenly:

"That Sikh Narayan Singh came, Jimgrim. He bade me be ready tomorrow with my sons and God knows how many camels for an expedition to last a month."

Grim nodded, smiling. He smiles with his eyes at Arabs in a way that seems to break down all suspicion and open the way for confidences.

"But it is impossible. By Allah, it can't be done."

"You've been doing things that can't be done all your life," Grim answered. "What's the trouble, O father of impossibilities?"

"I have a business in hand. It is profitable. All my sons and grandsons are engaged in it. Every camel I own, and twenty more that I have hired are in training for a long trip. The loads are made up. All is ready. We would have been gone day before yesterday, *inshallah*, if that young dog they have made Governor of El-Kalil hadn't got wind of it and set his cursed police to prevent us. He threatens the lot of us with jail if we as much as move. May Allah change his face! He only let me out of El-Kalil tonight to see you, Jimgrim, on condition that the driver promised not to set me down anywhere between there and here."

"Uh-huh. Young de Crespigny has wisdom."

"Wisdom, has he! *Taib.* I have business! Listen, Jimgrim; I have been a friend of yours. You and I have seen the color of the face of death together. When have I refused to do you a service? I have risked my neck, and the necks of all my sons for your sake——"

"Wasn't it worth while?"

"Yes, by Allah! But it is your turn to do me a favor. You have power in the land. When you suggest, the Administration listens. When you request, what you ask is granted. So say the word, and let me go about this business."

"What is the nature of the business?" Grim inquired cautiously. But subsequent events convinced me that he knew very well what the business was, only it is part of his method almost never to admit how much he knows.

"We had a prosperous thieving business, you know, Jimgrim, until you came to El-Kalil and put an end to it. There are no cleverer thieves than we, but you are a devil, and we can't outwit you."

"Well?"

"A man and his sons must live."

"That seems to be an axiom."

"But only a Jew can live legally in this land nowadays. We are not used to these new laws and restrictions, and can't understand them, because they are not in the Koran and we had no hand in making them. Under the Turks there was law, but that was good. All men understood it. There was a law against this, and a law against that—there were laws against all that was desirable; but there was a price for breaking the law, which could be arranged beforehand with the Turk; the price varied, but a good bargainer could make a profit.

"But these young British idiots won't play that game. The Turkish governor used to make his own laws, which everybody understood; but these British infants, such as de Crespigny, enforce laws made elsewhere by other people, which neither they nor any other man except a Jew can possibly understand, and though you can bribe a policeman to his heart's content, the man whose orders he must obey is incorruptible."

"Too bad!" Grim commented, when the old man paused for breath.

"So it became necessary to arrange for business beyond the border, where there are no British to enforce whatever the Jews require. And when I took my sons on that last trip with you to Petra, we all kept our ears to the ground."

Ali Baba paused again, this time in order to judge how much it might be safe to tell. His foxy old eyes blinked keenly for several seconds, trying to read faces in the jumpy light of the reading lamp; but there was only a smile hovering about Grim's eyes, and as I knew nothing it was easy to look the part of a stuffed owl. Grim raised his eyebrows

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at last, and relighted his pipe, to get the old man to talking again.

"So it happened that Mujrim, my oldest-born, went on a little expedition all alone. There was great risk, but he is a great adventurer, and he was in Allah's keeping; so he came back——"

"With a bag of gold-dust, which he sold for cash to Aaron Cohen," said Grim. "We all know that. Go on."

"You all know it, you say? Who are all of you that know it? *Bismillah!* Is there no such thing as a secret any more? Cohen swore he would not tell. Curse him, he shall eat his oath whole, and feel the knife that carves it inside his belly!"

"Cohen didn't tell," said Grim.

"Then, if you are not the devil, Jimgrim, he is your father and patron saint! How did you find out?"

"Easily. Cohen resold the gold-dust to the bank. The bank was obliged to report the purchase. It was known that Cohen had been to El-Kalil, and took a lot of cash with him; and there hasn't been gold-dust in El-Kalil for generations. He returned without the cash, but with the gold-dust. It was known that your son Mujrim had been away, and in which direction. There has been gold in Arabia ever since Solomon's time. Two and two make four. Go on, tell me the rest of it."

"*Mashallah!* To tell you things is like repeating the day's lesson to a *m'allim!* Tell me how much you know, Jimgrim, and I will answer whether it's true or false."

"Uh-uh! You came here to ask me a favor. State your case, O father of evasion."

"Well; that gold-dust was given as a trust to Mujrim. We are known far and wide as honorable thieves. A man can have confidence in our promises."

"Which man in this instance?"

"Jmil Ras."

Grim nodded. "Is he as handsome as his name implies?"

"I haven't seen him, Jimgrim. Mujrim tells me he is a wonder to behold. Surely he pays handsomely, and knows a trustworthy fellow when he sees him. After deducting a percentage for profit and expenses—half and half was the condition named, but the Jew cheated us about the price of gold-dust and it would not have been fair to charge the loss against our portion—the remainder was to be spent for certain goods, which we were to deliver by camel to a place beyond Abu Lissan.

"Now we have kept faith; we have laid out his share of the money with great care having sent even as far as Egypt for some of the things; and because Jmil Ras' share of the money was not sufficient, we invested some of ours, trusting to his fairness to make it good with interest. We are ready to do our part in full, Jimgrim, but a puppy of a governor prevents—may Allah cause his bowels to burn seven days and seven nights a week! Unless you help us, Jimgrim, we must fail; and who then can repay that money to Jmil Ras?"

"And if I help you?"

"Name your own terms, Jimgrim! Speak, and I agree!"

"All right. You may make the trip, but I'm coming with you."

"*Il hamdulillah!** May Allah bless your sons and grandsons an give you old age to enjoy them, Jimgrim! I swore no friend of yours could appeal to you in vain!"

"But as you suggested, it is I who name the terms," Grim continued, and Ali Baba peered at him once more like a fox.

"Whatever is possible, Jimgrim. Whatever is possible. There were things that even the Prophet could not do."

"You supply me and my friends with camels and escort as far as I choose to go. You and your sons obey me first, last, and all the time. My business comes first, but I pay no wages, and nothing for camel-hire. On those conditions, I will help you to deliver the goods to Jmil Ras, and we start tomorrow night. Do you agree?"

"In the name of Him who never sleeps, it is a bargain, Jimgrim! Allah makes all things easy!"

CHAPTER V

"Suppose we stage an accident!"

"THERE are a thousand ways to anywhere. but only one will serve," says the Arab proverb; so we took our former road by way of El-Kalil, although the simplest course would have been to let Ali Baba and his men come to us and then ride straight eastward from Jerusalem, crossing the Jordan by the iron bridge. We might have saved a day's march that way, but should undoubtedly have loosed a thousand tongues.

*Thank God!

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Ali Baba, like many another old man, needed little sleep and preferred that little in the afternoon; so back he went that night to El-Kalil to muster his sons and make all ready. He had told us the camels were in training, which means they had been kept without water for constantly increasing periods; they had now gone five days without a drink, and his most important business was to water them at dawn, superintending with experienced eye to make sure that each beast took its fill; for they will fool you if not watched, and lie down to die of drought the third day out from home.

We silenced the tongues of Jerusalem by changing into disguise next morning before we started. It's easy for Grim, who simply changes clothes and is an Arab; but to fix me up as an Indian, which is my only chance of being mistaken for a Moslem, takes time and trouble.

My head had to be shaved, for one thing; fortunately for the purpose I have a dark beard, which grows fast, and by removing all hair from where a white man grows it and allowing it to bristle and curl on my jaws instead, I can pass muster as a rather respectable-looking Indian *darweish*—which is a fanatical person with a taint of learning, who wanders at the prick of religious fanaticism.

Being a big man, I naturally look enormous in the narrow-legged cotton pantaloons and straight smock under a sort of frock-coat thing that well-to-do Indians affect. But that doesn't matter if I pose as from Lahore, where the giants of the North have left their physical stamp on more than one conquered race. The shaved head offsets the normal Arab contempt for Indians by creating the suggestion of religious authority, and a necklace of prayer-beads does the rest. The costume is comfortable enough, but when you put one of those great brown Bedouin cloaks on top of it, you're likely to sweat the fat off before riding many miles.

Grim and I rode horseback as far as Hebron, cantering the first few miles because of the risk of my being recognized until the dark whiskers should conceal a jawbone such as—so Grim tells me—might have been used by Samson when he slew the thousand Philistines.

If a thing is made known in Jerusalem it is multiplied a thousand-fold in Baghdad ten days afterward; Damascus passes it on by way of Beirut to the Golden Horn, and in about a month there is a question asked about it by a labor member in the House of Commons.

A little later, New York prints a paragraph about it in between the murders and divorces, and some one on the Stock Exchange sells the whole list short and starts rumors of war. It isn't a bad plan to avoid observation when you're off on secret business.

But there were few folk abroad that morning, except peasants, mostly women and asses laden with stuff for market with a leisurely, lordly man or two consuming cigarets in charge. They gave us a wide berth to avoid our dust, and also because we had rifles, which might have meant we were policemen. There are other places in the world where the police take toll of passers-by, but none where it is done more thoroughly, because the evil of the Turks lives after them.

An hour after daybreak the land lay white as a bone and the color of amethyst in the baking sun. The glimpse we had of the Dead Sea was of a sparkling sapphire set in the rust and sulfur of the Moab hills; and Jerusalem behind us was a gray-white sepulchre. There wasn't any milk and honey overflowing, nor any balm in the wind that brought dust devils courtesying and waltzing all the way from Egypt.

We were two dry men who drew rein at the governorate, reverently grateful for the luke-warm drinks mixed by de Crespigny, who prides himself with all the man-of-the-worldishness of six-and-twenty years on some attainments he does not possess. You can forgive him false pride in weird formulas for spoiling liquor, because he does not know that he is a genius at keeping peace among ungovernable men, and speaks of the impossible that happens regularly in his "parish," as he calls it, as "just my luck. I was born under a lucky star."

We were all day long in El-Kalil, talking things over with de Crespigny and dozing through the afternoon. There was information shared by Grim and de Crespigny that they did not trouble to explain to me, although they discussed it in my presence and did not try particularly hard to keep it secret from me. It seemed they both knew this man Jmil Ras, to whom Ali Baba proposed to deliver merchandise, and it was the nature of the merchandise that gave them most concern. Incidentally, it made

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me prick my ears more than if the camel-loads had contained machine guns and ammunition.

"Spades," said de Crespigny, "shovels, sieves, sledge-hammers, crowbars, picks, bags of cement—that all might be for building a fort or something; but here's the unexplainable—nine lengths of steel rail stolen from the railway stores at Ludd, three big sheaf-blocks pinched from a Greek boat laid up at Jaffa for repairs, and three great lumps of hard steel weighing more than a hundred pounds apiece, one with a hole through the narrow end, one shaped something like a bottle with a big nob where the cork would be, and the third an old-fashioned scale-weight by the look of it, with a bar shaped in the top to lift it by."

"Do you suppose the shapes are design or haphazard?" asked Grim.

"Both, I should say. There were plenty to choose from; they were being used as ballast by a coast-wise trading felucca, and Ali Baba offered such a price for his pick that the little captain saw the superior virtues of sacks filled with pebbles from the beach, and traded. I imagine Ali Baba chose the shapes that came nearest to specifications; but what d'you suppose Jmil Ras wants with them?"

"Well," said Grim, "he paid for them with gold-dust, didn't he? How would you go about getting gold out of quartz?" he asked, turning suddenly to me.

"Dolly it out with weights dropped by hand from a pulley," I answered. "I've worked out enough to pay for proper machinery in that way more than once; but it's hopeless unless the stuff assays a good many ounces to the ton, because you can't recover half of it. He'll need mercury——"

"Ali Baba has been moving heaven and earth for mercury and cyanid. Not a chance of getting either, though," said de Crespigny.

"I know where there's cyanid," Grim answered, "but mercury is another matter."

"Who is Jmil Ras anyhow?" I asked, breaking my rule of not asking questions. But I might as well have broken a plate or something of that sort. De Crespigny glanced swiftly at Grim, who is much more expert at concealing the fact that he knows and prefers not to tell. Grim's face didn't change a particle as he answered me.

"We aim to discover that on this trip. Where in thunder can we get cyanid?"

I made a suggestion at random.

"Unless the Huns left some behind on their retreat——" And suddenly Grim remembered.

"Weren't they experimenting with the glass business here, Crep? Took over a building in the glass-makers' quarter, didn't they? Put in a new-fangled furnace with a fuel-saving contraption to regulate the heat? Anybody been in there for a year?"

"No. Enemy property. Place is sealed up."

"If I remember rightly there was a big steel ball full of mercury that opened and closed the draft in some mysterious way," said Grim.

"Yes, maybe; but we can't break that seal," de Crespigny objected.

"I wonder how much mercury was in the thing, and whether it's there now. How much would we need?" asked Grim.

"Not much," said I. "An ounce or two would be better than none. You can use the stuff over and over. Depends on the scale of operations."

One piece of information Grim could not keep to himself. He was excited. The poker player's mask that he assumes when on a hot scent was growing uncommonly transparent; his left fist was clenched tight, and his forehead wrinkled into whorls.

"We've got to get that mercury or cyanid, Crep."

De Crespigny laughed and shook his head.

"Can't be done, old dear. Steal anything you want except enemy property. Can't have the Crown Prince tossing us *tu quoque*. I'll accept your receipt for anything you fancy, bones of Abraham included, but no Hun stuff—unless, of course, you care to override my authority."

"Wouldn't consider doing that, of course, but see here, Crep," said Grim with more impassioned earnestness in his voice than I had ever heard him use. "We've got to find a way of contriving this. It's Feisul's chance! The French are going to chase Feisul out of Damascus; that's a foregone conclusion, and about the best thing that can happen to him, for he hasn't a chance to make good as king of united Syria.

"He'll go to Europe, where he'll beard the politicians in their den and remind them of the promises they made when they wanted him in the war on any terms. They can't

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deny that they made the promises; and not even that gang could deny that Feisul and his Arabs made it possible to win the war. They promised him an independent Arab kingdom, and they'll have to make good. If anything on earth is certain, it's a dead sure bet that they'll send Feisul back to carve out an Arab government across the Jordan. He'll probably get Baghdad too to begin with."

"Let's hope so anyhow," laughed de Crespigny, "but what has that got to do with quicksilver? I'm acting deputy custodian of enemy property just now, and though I get no extra pay for it, a job's a job."

"It's this way," Grim answered. "What Feisul is going to need most of all is money. If he has to depend on European high finance he's likely to get ditched again before he has half a chance to make good. But if we can fix him up with an independent gold-mine, situated in Arabia beyond the zone of mandates and the reach of company promoters, rich enough in ore to pay for machinery out of profits, Feisul is a made man. D'you get me?"

"Yes, but that don't get you the quicksilver! Besides, it seems to be Jmil Ras' gold. What has Feisul got to do with it?"

"Leave that to me. Jmil Ras wouldn't send for mercury unless he needed it the worst way. Mercury and cyanid—good Lord! He must have known that inquiries for stuff like that would set the Intelligence Department by the ears. What worries me is that the next thing you know, the Zionists will hear of it."

"What if they do?"

"They need money."

"All right. They've no claim to Arabia?"

"They'd no claim to Palestine that any one out here could see; but here they are. If they claim Palestine because King Solomon built a temple in Jerusalem, what's to stop them from claiming the quartz out of which Solomon roasted his gold? This is a case for head-work. If we don't supply Jmil Ras with what he wants, sooner or later he's going to sell his prospect in the open market. We've got to help him make a killing, and then bottle up the secret until Feisul's time comes. Don't you see, Crep?"

"Sounds all right, if you can satisfy Jmil Ras. But I won't break that enemy property seal for Feisul or any one—not even for you, James Schuyler Grim; and I count you my friend at that."

"Never mind me. Think of Feisul."

"He's a friend, too, but I'm custodian."

"Suppose we stage an accident. How thick is the door? The windows are iron-barred, I remember, but a camel might kick the door in."

I had never seen Grim so desperate for an expedient. He is usually reserved to the point of taciturnity, and stolidly averse to argument, especially when he has a plan in mind. But now there were actually great beads of sweat standing on his forehead, and his normally quiet face had the keen expression of a heavy plunger watching a horse race.

"Not if I can keep away the camel," laughed de Crespigny. "No, Grim. You've either got to override me on the score of seniority—in which case I shall have to phone Jerusalem, of course—or the seal stays where it is."

"Well, I guess you're right, Crep. ——!"

Grim looked sharply at me, and just at that moment Narayan Singh came and stood in the doorway to ask for orders. He was dressed in his usual disguise as a Pathan, and what with the rifle and two bandoliers that he had picked out from the governorate armory he looked sufficiently humorously savage even for that part. Like me, he looks enormous in clothes of that kind. It occurred to me to wonder which of us two was the heaviest, and that —added to Grim's swift glance—gave me another thought.

"I'll speak to Narayan Singh," said I, "and left the room.

"In the name of all wonders, *sahib*, what has happened to our Jimgrim, *sahib?*" the Sikh asked me when we reached the street.

"Do you know any of our Western mythology?" I asked him. "Who were the ancient gods, for instance?"

"They made me read that nonsense in the school where I learned English."

"You remember then that Mercury was the messenger of the gods?"

"Aye, wings on his ankles he had."

"There's reason to believe the gentleman is hiding in a German glass-factory in El-Kalil; but like the spirit in the vase in the Arab fish-story, he's sealed up. Nobody's allowed to break the seal. But if you and I can get him out and leave the seal unbroken, I know how to make him coax gold out of rock, and Jimgrim thinks he can make him

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set a new king on an ancient throne."

"Well and good. We be two resourceful men. Lead the way and let us try."

"I don't know the way," I answered, "but Ali Baba does, and he has sixteen thieves to lend a hand."

So we threaded the mazy *suk* of El-Kalil and found old Ali Baba in the camel-*khan* sitting in the shade on top of a pile of roped loads, smoking his water-pipe and lecturing his sons. When I told him what I had in mind it did not take him ten seconds to decide to show the way.

But we did not go trooping through the narrow streets to call attention to ourselves; nineteen men, seventeen of whom were notorious thieves, all headed in the same direction would have given El-Kalil a theme to talk about for weeks. Ali Baba knew a way over the roofs that was hot, devious and risky, because the harem folk don't encourage that kind of liberty; but we ran less risk of observation that way, for the heat had driven every one indoors, or into the shadow of the ancient arches.

IN LESS than ten minutes all nineteen of us were standing on a flat roof with a high stone chimney at one end, which Ali Baba guaranteed to be the sealed-up German factory. I got down to the street and made sure, for there was no sense in burgling the wrong place. The seal was on the door all right, and the door was of solid olive-wood, which no camel in the universe could have kicked down, although any of the long-necked beasts can kick from either end about as hard as three mules.

The windows were all barred with thick iron. I couldn't find another door, and there were no weak places in the walls; so I climbed up to the roof again. The roofs of El-Kalil are of stone, at least a foot thick and cemented; there was no chance of breaking through without making noise enough to disturb the whole city's siesta. I had hoped to find a trap-door, which Narayan Singh's weight and mine combined might break.

I don't like lying as a general thing, but taking one consideration with another and the fact that we were burgling Hun property, I wouldn't have minded swearing that was an accident. However, there was no trap-door, so I was saved from perjury.

The chimney was the only thing for it, and the top of that was barred across with an iron grille; but the job had been done hastily and the ends of the iron weren't set deep in the masonry. Mujrim, Ali Baba's oldest and biggest son, fetched a long piece of wood, and the grille came loose in about two minutes when we used that as a lever and he, the Sikh and I exerted our combined strength.

Those expert thieves would have gone down the chimney like rats into a hole, but as I would have to show them which was the mercury and how to get it, I decided to go first; and not being an old-timer at their trade, they had to lower me. So they made a long rope of their waist-cloths, making one end fast under my arms, and I went down feet first—slowly, because the big knots in the rope didn't render freely over the chimney coping, which was about a foot higher than the head of a man standing on the roof. In fact, you had to stand on a man's shoulders in order to get into the chimney to begin with.

It was an idiotic thing to go first. We should have sent the smallest man to prospect for us. I am bigger than Narayan Singh, and even than Mujrim, and although what isn't bone in my great bulk is mostly muscle, sheer strength doesn't fit a man, any more than wealth is said to, for passing through the needle's eye.

In addition to getting stuffier and rougher as I went down, the chimney narrowed, for some ultra-scientific reason known best to the Germans who designed it, and I stuck twice and nearly suffocated before reaching a queerly shaped black hole at the bottom, lined with soot. By that time I had lost a lot of skin off my knees and elbows and was about two-thirds choked in the bargain. Hardly any light came down the chimney, of course, but by groping I discovered that the only opening into the factory was a slot about six inches deep and two feet wide on about a level with my waist as I stood on a deep cushion of soot.

I hated to be hauled up again. It was going to hurt for one thing, and for another such soot as I hadn't scraped off on the way down was going to fall on my head. However, there seemed nothing else for it, so I shook the rope to call their attention above, and the whole thing fell down on top of me. A moment later the square of blue sky overhead was shut off by Narayan

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Singh's head and shoulders, leaning over to inquire if I was all right. I wouldn't be surprized to hear that I used bad language.

However, that wasn't the end of the world, of course. They could get another rope and lower it, and no doubt there was air enough down there to keep a man alive indefinitely, although it did not feel like it; my lungs, in fact, felt full of soot already, and the sensation was of having been buried alive.

Narayan Singh kept asking idiotic questions, and one way and another my temper got the better of me. I could have thrashed the fools who dropped that rope, and killed the men who designed such a trap of a chimney. I shouted to Narayan Singh to take his wooden head out of the light, and in a huge rage at the notion of having to be hauled up empty-handed, grimy as a sweep, to be laughed at by those Arabs, I began to grope about with my fingers in the dark.

The hole I stood in was so small that I could run my hands over every inch of the walls without shifting my feet, and I scraped the soot off, thinking that perhaps the miscreants who built it might have left a man-hole somewhere.

But all I discovered was a round iron plate that covered a hole about large enough to admit a man's arm. It was fixed in place as firmly as a strong-room door, being bolted apparently to another plate on the outside. My wrath boiled over entirely at that discovery. You know how unreasonable a man can be in a tight place, when he feels he has brought his trouble on himself and would rather pass the blame along? I don't get that way often, but when I do I see fire.

I wanted to do damage—began to grope with my fingers for something I could seize on and break; and I found a crack in the masonry extending from the bottom of that iron plate all the way down in a zigzag to the level of my feet, where the piled-up soot had filled and covered it.

It wasn't reason, but downright savagery that made me set my shoulder against that crack, brace both feet against the opposite wall, and exert every ounce of strength I had in me. I thought of Samson among the Philistines breaking down the galleries on his tormentors; of Horatius holding the bridge over the Tiber in ancient Rome—Oh, of loads of splendid things that had no conceivable bearing on my predicament; and with the fury of the Berserker that lives somewhere underneath my normal calm I shoved until my muscles swelled and cracked and crimson fire blazed under my shut eyelids.

Something had to give, or I should have been lamed for life by my own exertion. I came within an ace of serious injury as it was; for suddenly the whole wall of the chimney below that iron plate and to one side of the crack gave outward, and I shot my full length on to a smooth stone floor all mixed up with the falling masonry. And there I lay for I dare say sixty seconds, wondering whether I were dead, and if not, why?

Narayan Singh's excited booming down the chimney made me begin to think again like a more or less rational being. Alive or dead, there will always be something to do I reckon. I wasn't bruised worth mentioning, but I had made a hole in that chimney wall that you could have wheeled a barrow into, so either the manufacturers' tables of the tensile strength of cement are away off the mark, or else that was local stuff put up without analysis or guarantee. I yelled up the chimney to the gang to get another rope, and set about exploring.

There was the new-fangled furnace sure enough, and it did not seem to have been used much. In front of it, protruding from a neck-like tube was the steel ball Grim had spoken of—not much bigger than a good-sized cocoanut, which it furthermore resembled, in that its only opening connected with the stem, or neck. There was a sledge-hammer near by, and I might possibly have broken the ball off; but it occurred to me that people with enough ambition to import that furnace would be likely to provide for accidents. So I looked further, kicking open a locked door in a partition wall.

The first glimpse inside set me to whistling so loud that Narayan Singh bellowed down the chimney again to ask what I wanted. A long table set against the wall of a narrow room was piled with experimental pieces of rolled glass, and the back of nearly every perfect piece was silvered! Who couldn't love a German after that? I changed my mind about the Huns, forgave them for the chimney, and began to look about for the store of quicksilver, nervously refusing attention to a persistent fear that some manager with time on his hands might

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have used up all the furnace's reserve supply in the course of a private experiment.

It turned out that he had done just that. A small container that had held the stuff was empty in a corner on the floor; but that wasn't all. On another bench was more rolled glass all laid out ready to be silvered, as if the experiments had gone far enough and mirror-making was about to begin on a small commercial scale.

Now the man who had made those preparations might have been waiting for the quicksilver to be imported; but in that case it was hardly likely that he would have laid the glass ready in rows. So I kicked down the door of another small room, hoping for a pound or two but never dreaming of the affluence in store.

There was a whole flask of mercury. But right in the middle of the floor of a big, dark closet stood a whole drum of cyanid of potassium not yet unsealed, although the top had been knocked from the crate.

Well; no nugget ever found by a Klondike sourdough or a fossicking old-timer at Ballarat was destined to have more far-reaching results than that unlawful discovery of mine. Like a stone cast into a pool, it has made rings that have not done rippling outward yet.

All I thought of at the time was Grim's need of the stuff, and the probable delight of Jmil Ras, whoever he might be, remembering my own emotions on many an occasion when the needful turned up on a prospect from nowhere. But as the Indians say, we men are only as flies riding on the wheel; we have no foresight worthy of the name; we can guess pretty accurately what will happen when we touch the match to powder; but when a move and a discovery at random fits into the universal scheme so that the whole machinery of nations goes forward half-a-turn, we never dream of the result.

It was enough that Grim had what he wanted. In presence of that satisfaction difficulties vanished, and the business of repacking the stuff into improvised containers that could be hauled up-chimney—of following it with a rope under my armpits that cut like a medieval torture-rack—of rounding up cement and sand in order to reset the grille in place above the chimney—all got accomplished somehow.

Fortunately I had left my Bedouin cloak on the roof, and so could hide the torn and filthy state of my clothes when I reached the street. A good sluicing from a goat-skin water-bag in Ali Baba's camel-khan removed the soot from head and hands, and I was able to regain the governorate and get up-stairs unnoticed by any one but Grim, who smiled at me through the open door as I passed, but said nothing. De Crespigny's back was turned, which was as well.

Narayan Singh bought new, clean clothes for me in the *suk*, and brought them up to de Crespigny's bedroom; and he smuggled out my sooty rags for some beggar's benefit. I rather expected Grim to come up-stairs and ask me questions, but he didn't, and if de Crespigny suspected anything he kept quiet about it too.

Before he left with my discarded clothes Narayan Singh put my mind at ease about the plunder, and gave me some information on another point that proved important in its way.

"Old Ali Baba has nailed up the poison in new boxes, and is hiding them among the camel-loads, *sahib*. He is in a great good temper, for he swears that you, *sahib*, are a prince of thieves with whom it is an honor to go stealing! . He vows that your name shall be no longer Ramsden, but *Harami*.* Henceforth he says he is your father and is proud to call you son!"

CHAPTER VI

"Yemen—a thousand miles away—that hardly sounds like Jeremy!"

SO WE were a well-found, well-contented party that rode out of El-Kalil that night and headed for the south end of the Dead Sea. Old Ali Baba is as careful of his camels as a good sea captain of his ship, as well as past master at judging their points, which are more elusive than those of a horse but equally important. We were mounted on the best beasts out of Syria, and swayed along at a fine clip under the stars in almost utter silence, except for the half-dozen brass bells swinging from camel's necks.

The baggage beasts were tied in strings of four, and each string was towed, as it were, by one of Ali Baba's sons. The rest of us rode anywhere we chose to in the line, with Grim and Ali Baba leading, knee to knee.

We all get our share of knocks and disappointments, but I have found the world a

*Thief.

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good old ball for all that, and have enjoyed the past, take it on the whole, nearly as much as I expect to like the future. Having wandered, I have seen and experienced a thousand things that are only hearsay to the fellows who have to stand by the home jobs, and there aren't many of the pleasant ways that I haven't sampled. But the best of all were those nights on camel-back on what Grim calls his beat.

The moonlight made the dusty dry land seem to be carpeted with snow. The deep, blue-velvet shadows seemed to be full of the ghosts of ancient history, and the camel-bells intoned the same tune that has chimed along ridge and wady, desert and dry water-course for six or seven thousand years that we know about, and only the stars can tell you how many ages before that—each bell sounding a different note. And as no two camels stride alike there is no monotony; the carillon keeps changing.

You don't talk much. Now and then a curt remark is shouted down the line; but for the most part you sit up there and meditate, with your head among the stars—rifle slung behind you—swaying comfortably as the beasts swing forward everlastingly—too contented to talk, or even to smoke.

You'll hear a different tale from folk who have ridden baggage-camels for their sins. There is a great gulf fixed between the two experiences—a gulf as wide as that between old Ali Baba's gang and the thieves who pose as law-abiding men. In a land where ninety-nine per cent. or so are thieves, it is safest and least mortifying to share your tent and provender with such as call themselves by their right name; frankly admitting that they are rascals—taking open pride in it, in fact—they will frankly find a decent camel for you. That quality of frankness is invariably based on elemental manhood, which is the only thing worth betting on anywhere from West Street to Hoboken, going East.

Nothing happened for four days, until we reached the rusty track of the Hedjaz Railway twenty miles to the southward of El-Maan, not far from where a desert track reaches out toward Petra and the Edom Mountains. There we gave the camels a twenty-four-hour rest after their long climb out of the Jordan Valley; for it doesn't matter how carefully, and with what experience, you cinch the loads, up-hill and down-hill work are going to punish animals that were built for traveling at speed along the level.

So we pitched our little cluster of worn tents in the shade of an enormous rock, and sat down desert-fashion; which means that we did nothing with both hands continuously, while the camels munched dry thorns the day long and moaned and muttered through the night. We had the loads arranged in a semi-circle like a wall around us, and barring the flies and a scorpion or two, along with rather more sun and hot wind than you get at the seaside, that was as good a place to waste time in as any.

We had forced the camels to one long march in order to reach that spot at nightfall, so as to start off again by night when the full day's rest was over. By four o'clock of the afternoon, a little while before the hot wind died, we all began to grow restless. Mujrim got into an argument with Ali Baba as to whether it wasn't time to go and round up the camels, which started a lecture by the old man, every word of which I had heard ten times before; so I went over to Grim's tent, where he was sitting in the entrance with his legs crossed, smoking.

I hadn't anything particular to say; you seldom do have after the fourth day out, when all the details of the daily routine have arranged themselves and the world you left behind you seems a million miles away. But I'm not as self-contained as Grim—haven't yet quite rid myself of the silly civilized convention which obliges you to say something whenever you approach a man. There's no excuse for it. You're never really fit to be a man's friend until you can let the days go by without a word. Talk, at best, is only a substitute for proper apprehension, as the animals and ancients understand. Grim is always polite, even when you break in on his solitude.

"Strange," I said, "that you can't recall my Australian friend Jeremy. At the time when he was transferred from Egypt for special service under you, Lawrence, I'm told, was holding Petra; and as you were doing factotum for Lawrence, you must have been somewhere between here and Akaba at that time. Doesn't the neighborhood stir your memory? When you return to a place after a considerable absence, don't all the incidents and the people connected with it in your experience come back to mind?"

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"Why, yes, they generally do," said Grim.

"Unaccountable, then, that you can't remember him. He was not the kind that is easy to forget—a boisterous, lovable, laughing, handsome fellow, well set up, and as full of tricks as an organ-grinder's monkey—ready with his hands—a great conjurer. Good Lord, man! You couldn't possibly set eyes on Jeremy and not remember him. Did he die before he got to you?"

Grim eyed me steadily for thirty seconds, not considering me apparently, nor my question, but turning over something in his mind that puzzled him.

"Why do you suppose," he said at last, "that a fellow like Jeremy Ross should choose a country like Arabia to soldier in? Wasn't he fond of company and good jokes? Wasn't Ross the sort of man who whoops her up with the crowd whenever possible, and goes crazy from loneliness?"

"He'd heard of you. He told me his one ambition was to see service under your command. No, I should say Jeremy could burn his own smoke as well as any man."

"You think so? You really think that?" Grim asked me with surprizing earnestness.

"Spill the beans," I suggested. "I never could guess conundrums. Out with what you know."

I BELIEVE it hurts Grim almost physically to divulge his thoughts before what seems to him the proper time. It isn't that he can't trust you, for his judgment of whom to trust is more nearly infallible than any man's I know; and he has the courage of his own conviction. Neither does he mistrust himself, or he would never undertake the dangerous missions he delights in. The nearest parallel that I can think of is that of a Scot with money in his purse; he is canny in the use of it, and careful not to tell. When he must, as it were, spend the information he hates not to get value in return for it.

"Your friend Jeremy Ross," he said at last, "was in my camp all told about three weeks. He was a good man, but utterly undisciplined; I should say he was so sure of his own keen intelligence that orders from a less intelligent superior seemed like an insult to him.

"We put him to work at Akaba off-loading cattle out of bum-boats, and he doped out a new way of doing it without using gear or injuring the cattle—did a rare good job, in fact. But there was a certain Major Hendrick there, who knew nothing about cattle, but had opinions; and one of his opinions was that Jeremy Ross needed snubbing. So he ordered the method changed.

"It cost us about fifty head of cattle, and Ross said things not provided for in the army regulations. Well, you know how it is; when a trooper talks back at a major, the trooper gets the worst end. I was a major, too, but Hendrick was my senior, and you have to watch points in any case, taking the part of a trooper against an officer. The best I could do was to pretend I knew nothing, and to transfer Ross out of reach for the time being.

Major Hendrick proposed to make a court-martial case of it, but there wasn't any place to lock a man up in, and I shipped Ross away with a supply caravan that started inland the same afternoon. Hendrick kicked up an awful row, but couldn't prove that I knew the Australian was under arrest; and anyhow, I was too busy to be quarreled with."

"What did Hendrick do about it?" I asked; for Grim showed symptoms of drying up at the source.

"Nothing. Hendrick died that night. The cattle he didn't understand broke loose and he was horned in the dark. But I guess Ross had the wind up. His defaulter sheet was none too rosy, and a man of his caliber doesn't enjoy the prospect of military prison—especially for an accumulation of alleged offences that are not considered crimes in civil life. Ross disappeared."

"Deserted?"

Grim raised his eyebrows noncommittally.

"You couldn't prove it by me. The whole caravan disappeared, and Ross with it. That sort of thing happened rather frequently, because we hadn't officers to spare, and now and then the Arabs used to call it a short war, when left to themselves, and light out for home with any plunder they could lay their hands on. Whether they took Jeremy Ross with them, or killed him before they bolted, didn't transpire."

Bear in mind, Grim wasn't deliberately trying to keep information from me. I'm quite sure of that. I suspect that most of these secret keepers, who get the name for iron self-control, really withhold information just as naturally as they breathe. The self-control in Grim's case is added on to a prenatal peculiarity.

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Mujrim and two of his brothers, started off after the camels and that was a job that would take them fully half-an-hour. There was plenty of time to coax admissions out of Grim, so I settled down cross-legged straight in front of him and pulled out cigarets.

"Now, see here, Grim," said I, "I knew Jeremy Ross and I know you. You didn't help him out of that scrape for nothing, and he didn't disappear for nothing. No fellow of your disposition could know Jeremy for three weeks and not appreciate him. What did you and he cook up together?"

"Nothing."

"He didn't die and you know it! What became of him?"

"I don't know."

"You mean you've no official knowledge!"

"Well?"

"Who's this Jmil Ras we're going to see?"

"We're going to see."

"Jmil Ras—Jeremy Ross—I've heard names more dissimilar! Are they one and the same man?"

"Wait and see," he answered, smiling at me blandly.

"You've no call to be reserved with me," I said. "Even if you did connive at Jeremy's desertion, and admitted it to me, I wouldn't give you away. Surely you know that?"

He nodded.

"I didn't. I've no proof that he deserted, and I don't believe he did. I don't know a thing about him for certain."

"What do you know about Jmil Ras?"

"No more, and no less than I know about Jeremy Ross."

"Then what do you suspect?"

"That's different."

"Spill it!"

"About a dozen incidents since the armistice was signed have led me to suspect that Jeremy Ross wasn't killed. I hardly believed at the time that he could have been—at all events, not by the men he went away with that afternoon. He was clowning, ventriloquizing and doing stunts for them before they started, and you've no notion how the Arabs idolize a fellow who can do that kind of thing. He had a natural gift for learning Arabic, and a talent for amusing folk that was even greater than his flair for resenting Jack-in-officiousness; and underneath all that he had keen common sense. There was nothing the matter with Jeremy Ross except boisterous spirits and a little too much independence."

"And you're pretty sure in your own mind—aren't you?—that Jmil Ras and Jeremy Ross are the same."

"I won't say that. It's just possible; and I've known of equally strange circumstances. It might be the worst that could have happened, if it's true."

"How so?"

"This message from the Avenger doesn't look good. If Jeremy Ross can really burn his own smoke, as you called it just now, and if Jmil Ras is really he, we may be able to pull a fat chestnut out of the fire for Feisul. But if Jmil Ras is a Jeremy Ross who got bored and lost patience, then all these supplies we're taking him will only add fuel to the fire. I wouldn't help Jeremy Ross or any other white man exploit Arabia against the Arabs. I'm for the Arabs in their own country, and dead set against all foreign interference. However, it may all turn out to be a mare's nest. We'll know soon."

There were other matters to learn first, though, and one was how fast the post can ride when Arabia deigns to admit she is in a hurry. Why is it that the men who drive like Jehu son of Nimshi are the most lethargic at all other times? Your consistently energetic man hardly ever drives furiously.

There came a rider like a black insect in a dust-cloud, pushing a racing camel as if life depended on the number of yards covered before dark. We could see the incessant stick long before we could make out whether we were to be spoken with or avoided; in fact, the rider was in such a hurry that we were possibly unseen in the shadow of that great acre of rock until we were so close that a rifle shot could have compelled an interview.

It was no man, but a woman, dressed in the somber black cotton from head to foot that usually hides the Bedouin lady's charms; and the moment she was near enough to recognize us she gave a wild, shrill cry of welcome that put at rest all doubt of her intention and of her identity.

She cried out again when Grim got to his feet, and rode at him like a warrior brandishing her rifle.

But none raised a rifle to prevent her.

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We all knew Ayisha, the divorced wife of Ali Higg the self-styled Lion of Petra, whom Grim had managed to remarry to Saoud the Avenger. I told about that in the last tale. She was the last person in the world who would want to injure Grim. Besides, she was laughing.

And Lord! Wasn't she good to look at, as she halted her spent beast within a yard of him, saluting with her hand up to her forehead like a man. Most of those desert women grow old early, and are hags at twenty-eight. She was possibly twenty, or twenty-one, and though she must have been nearly as tired as the camel, she looked seventeen and shone with youth through the mask of desert dust.

"*Il awafil** O, Jimgrim, it is good to see you!" she exclaimed, laughing down at him before leaping from the camel to stand facing him as frankly as a woman from the West. She had learned a lot from her short association with us what time Grim checkmated Ali Higg, being one of those rare Eastern women who learn quickly because they are not too conservatively settled in the ancient ways.

"Welcome, Ayisha! What brings you?" Grim answered smiling.

"An ill-wind brings me! Thanks to the Lord of Mercies who sent you to befriend me, Jimgrim, I have a man for husband. But Allah jests savagely now and then."

"Are the other wives too jealous of you?" Grim asked; for there wasn't any other likely reason why a rather newly married woman should be riding away from home alone in all that hurry.

"No," she answered. "Not too jealous. Not more than enough to amuse me. But unless you come swiftly I am like to lose my man!"

The camels were collected in a bunch and were roaring out their usual objections to being saddled and put to work; but instead of swearing back at them and putting on the harness all our gang had come clustering around Grim and Ayisha. But Narayan Singh came thrusting himself among them, elbowing right and left.

"Are ye cattle or men?" he thundered. "Is there no room to spread in all this desert? Is there no work to do? Ye cluster like the flies around a bad smell, yet ye have enough smell of your own to shame a camel, every one of you!"

That was hardly a gentle hint, but they seemed disinclined to take it. Moreover, they weren't a good gang to insult too freely—not if you hoped to preserve peace. I was as keen as any one to hear what Ayisha had to say, but it was likely that if I waited they would all stay too, and Narayan Singh might feel the point of a long knife for his trouble. So I led the way toward the camels and lent a hand with the heaviest loads—a task that even Mujrim, their strongest, was pleased enough to have me perform.

So I got no other information just then than the guess-work of the gang tossed off between grunts, as they saddled the protesting camels, with all the assurance with which old-timers pretend they know when they don't, the wide world over. Mujrim pretended to know most, of course, since he had paid a secret visit to Jmil Ras; and the whole-cloth completeness of his misinformation may explain why Grim hadn't bothered as much as to question him about the man whose goods we were delivering.

"Jmil Ras is a handsome Sheik, whose wives are growing old. He has seen Ayisha, and she him. Her husband the Avenger is jealous, for he is a proud Sheik, to whom it is no pleasure to consider sharing his fourth wife with a rival; so he set a strong guard to close the road between Ayisha and Jmil Ras. But he who would keep a she-fox in the ground should stop the hole at both ends! He watches that way, and she has bolted this. She heard that our Jimgrim is coming, and ran to meet him! Can not he who married her to the Avenger marry her again to Jmil Ras? That is the long and short of it. Look—see how she pleads with him there where they stand together!"

Ali Baba, for very pride in his great black-bearded oldest-born, confirmed every word of that story. He was in position to, of course, not having visited Jmil Ras, nor having anything to go on but imagination. Supposing Jmil Ras really to be Jeremy, I could have invented that sort of story all too easily myself, and was only too prone to believe it; for a man doesn't need to have Jeremy's fondness for company before he can get into trouble with women, in a land where that kind of thing is deadly dangerous. I could very easily imagine Jeremy indulging in an affair with Ayisha, just out of devilment and for the sake of running counter to convention.

*Hail.

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Before we had got the camels loaded there were raw jokes going the round, and the whole gang was set for a romance in high life, with daggers, poison, torture and a couple of blood-feuds all thrown in—enjoying the prospect almost as much as if it were something that had actually happened, for Mahommed, the gang poet, to make songs about. For they prefer to glorify with song the past that all men know, rather than the future that lies in Allah's lap.

And though Narayan Singh affected to attach no weight to their prognostications, his own were hardly reassuring. He and I sat on the rump of a loaded camel, smoking and watching Grim, waiting for him to give the order to march.

"Hitherto we had a problem that was simple," he growled. "What it was I know not, but it was simple, for it had to do with men. Now there is a woman in it, and nothing that they touch is simple any longer. Moreover, we know the woman. What is worse, she knows us. Those women remember things that a man forgets; and if one of us in the past once showed a weakness, she will use that as a target for her brains at every opportunity."

"She is grateful to Jimgrim," I answered. "It isn't likely she would try to injure us."

"No woman knows what is injury to a man," he retorted. "Whatever looks good to her she believes must be good for her victims. I knew a woman once who truly thought that death must be good for me because she wished to see me dead; she was a very religious woman and a great advocate of reform among us Sikhs, but I observed that the changes she proposed were all designed for her advantage. She wished to see me dead because of things I knew that she did not wish known. So I made love to her, and she drank the poison she prepared for me. I shall make strong love to Ayisha; it is safest."

He had made what he calls "strong love" to her right up to the day when Grim contrived to marry her to the Avenger, but hadn't accomplished much beyond providing her and all the rest of us with amusement by the way. I dare say I grinned reminiscently.

"You have my permission to laugh at me," he said, "for you are one of those who laugh without contempt and jest without malice. Nevertheless, it is better to be like Jimgrim and not laugh when a man speaks out of his heart's knowledge. Ayisha will make show of scorning my advances, but I shall make all the more show of overwhelming passion. To her that will seem like a weakness. And as in war we look for the enemy's weak point, so she, being a woman, will look for this party's weakest member and will suppose that I am the one. Thus, whatever her purpose may be, she will try to use me. I shall seem to walk into her trap, with the result that Jimgrim will receive what the army calls intelligence."

Well; it looked to me rather like a bear-trap set to catch a fly, but there never was sense in sneering at an honest fellow's notions. I changed the subject slightly.

"What do you suppose is the reason why the Avenger has sent for Jimgrim?"

"As well try to guess what is behind the moon! But I know this, *sahib*, and you know it too, for you were present. It was agreed between Jimgrim and the Avenger that because the Avenger yielded to Jimgrim's terms of settlement in the Ali Higg dispute, when he might easily have broken faith and made great trouble, therefore the Avenger should have the right to send for Jimgrim to help him out of any difficulty.

"And the Avenger said—you heard him say it—that if there should be no excuse for summoning Jimgrim he would take care to create one. Well, *sahib*, if you give a child a pistol he will fire it off. These Arabs are children, and the most like children are the chiefs, for they have men's lives to play with, which are the most enticing toys. Give an Arab chief the right to send for such a man as Jimgrim whenever he gets into trouble, and he will make trouble. The nature of the trouble? Who knows? Who cares? Trouble is the name of it. It is all one. You will find that our Jimgrim has his work cut out."

The sun was nearly down by then, and the gang cook—one of Ali Baba's grandsons—spilled hot rice, coconut oil and rubbery chicken into a great tin pan, around which we squatted on our hunkers for the evening meal, Narayan Singh foregoing all the rules of caste—as the Sikh is supposed to do in any case, but almost never does, except at the spur of necessity. We dipped our right hands into the mess and ate in the usual hurry, because whoever doesn't eat fast gets a lot less than his share.

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But Grim ate alone. And Ayisha ate alone; for not even her disrespect for convention entitled her to share a meal with menfolk. It was really a remarkable concession that she wasn't kept waiting until after we had finished, and it wouldn't have been made, only that Grim was determined on an early start.

Most of us were stanch Moslems, and those who were not were pretending to be, but the law requiring prayer at sunset, which is all-important, was forgotten, whereas there was quite a little comment on the circumstance that the *bint*, as they called Ayisha, was allowed to give herself such airs. In fact, we acted pretty much like Christians, take us on the whole.

I didn't get a chance to talk to Grim until we had left the camping-place a mile behind and were heading nearly southeast over wilderness that Moses and his horde made famous centuries ago. Then I whacked my camel to a gallop and drew beside him in the lead.

"Well; what's the news?" I asked him, for it was a dead sure bet that he wouldn't tell me unless I did ask.

"Jmil Ras came from Yemen at the south end of Arabia about two years ago. He has a ragtag following, said to be very fierce and rather well disciplined; and he has established himself in a deserted village on the side of a hill about twenty miles from Abu Kem, where he defies all comers.

"They say he has rebuilt the village and fortified it strongly, and the malcontents are flocking from all over the place to join him. The Avenger, who claims to rule that district, demanded tribute, which was scornfully refused. The Avenger threatened to exterminate him, and Jmil Ras retorted by ambushing about a hundred of the Avenger's men, taking their camels and weapons, stripping them, and sending them back stark naked with a verbal message to the general effect that two can play at the extermination game. So the Avenger has sent for me."

"But why Ayisha?"

"The man who brought the message to Jerusalem seems to have disappeared. Nothing's been heard of him. Most likely he was murdered for his camel and rifle. The Avenger had relays of men in wait at different points to intercept him and pass the word along. They've seen us and reported us by signal; so Ayisha was sent to meet us half way on the supposition that possibly the first messenger never reached Jerusalem. It seems she told the Avenger she has influence with me; and his other wives encouraged him to send her off alone so as to have a good basis for starting an intrigue against her."

"Yemen?" I said. "That's a thousand miles away. That hardly sounds like Jeremy."

"No," he admitted, "it hardly does. But then there's this—they say Jmil Ras is a magician, who can change bullets into gold and make the dead saints talk in their tombs. Does that sound to you like an Arab, or an impudently humorous Australian?"

CHAPTER VII

"A member of a strangely free and independent, brave and disrespectful sect."

I GOT no more out of Grim. He did not propose to hamper his free range of thought with guesswork based on half the facts, and said so. I believe that on such occasions he forces his thoughts into channels that lead anywhere at all except into the maze that lies ahead of him—thinks about the stars, or cabbages and kings, or Shakespeare.

Maybe I'm wrong about that; but I know that when we halted about midnight for a half-hour rest and I drew abreast of him again, he pulled out a pocket edition of Mark Twain—"A Yankee at King Arthur's Court" I think it was—and leaned against his camel's rump to read it in the moonlight.

Perhaps it was only a hint to me that he didn't want to talk, but I think not. He seemed really absorbed in the book, wrinkling his forehead over the fine print and chuckling occasionally, very quietly, as if the humor were a secret between the author and himself.

Our Arabs were hugely impressed. Ali Baba beckoned me away, and I joined him, thinking he had some request to make to Grim by proxy. When the old fox had any particularly outrageous demand in mind he usually tried to make me the go-between, partly because Grim seldom refused me anything if he could help it, but also in order to lay the blame of a possible refusal on to my head and retain the good opinion of his sons, who regarded him as an arch-strategist, who could always get what he

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wanted. However, for a wonder, he had no request to pass along on that occasion.

"Jimgrim prays," he said sternly. "Let him alone. I have talked with the woman Ayisha. Sometimes women don't lie, and if the tenth of what she says is true it will take a deal of prayer to get us through to Jmil Ras."

As he was a professional thief, and all his sons and grandsons were the same, I was curious to know exactly why that thought should trouble him.

"You've had your money, haven't you?" said I. "If you can't get through, what difference does it make?"

He stroked his beard for thirty seconds before answering, and his wrinkled old face grew reproachful.

"In El-Kalil," he said at last, with something near grief in his voice, "I named you *Harami*, but you are Ramsden after all! Under that black beard of yours is only a fool's face, or you wouldn't ask such a question. Under that great strength is only a sheep's heart. You will never make an honest thief! *Bismillah!* Ask my sons; ask Mujrim—ask Mahommed—Hassan—Achmet—Yussuf—any one of them. Ask what I would do to any one of them who named a price and took the pay but failed to keep faith! You have no understanding, Ramsden; you are only a foreign unbeliever with the strength and the brains of a bull! Jimgrim would never ask such a question. Not even that bull-headed Sikh would ask it. Allah! Am I to be thought a common cheat in my old age?"

How was that for a rebuke? I called him Allah's pet rascal and tried to jolly him out of his ill temper, but he was as rufiled as a turkey in the wind, and the more I sought to soothe him the angrier he became. So I told him I would forgive him if he liked for that good repeating pistol of mine that he stole on our former trip and, quoting a text from the Koran about unseemly pride, left him to think that over.

It hurts loaded camels to stand still, and our beasts were all kneeling, grumbling of course, and squealing for a bite at any one who passed them close enough. I went and squatted beside Mujrim in the lee of one of them, for he and I had been great friends ever since I fought and licked him in the Valley of Moses close to Petra. He nodded in the direction of his irascible old father, as much as to say that I wasn't the only one who got into a bath of anger now and then, but said nothing, and warned me with a gesture to keep silence too.

There were voices coming from the far side of the camel next to us—Narayan Singh's deep bass, and Ayisha's alto. I suppose you couldn't choose a more suitable scene for making love, with the moonlight bathing the desert in honey-colored light, colored stars twinkling almost close enough to be plucked like jewels from a purple pall, and the hills on the horizon looming softly mysterious, sending the vague, spicy scent of Araby toward us on a warm wind.

"O darling!" boomed the Sikh in his best Arabic, that is perfectly grammatical but contains a softer, throatier aspirate than any Arab can accomplish. "O heart of my desire! What does it matter to me that a son of sixty dogs who dubs himself Avenger flatters himself by calling you his fourth wife? I am a Pathan of the Orakzai—a man of violence, whose passion brooks no living rival!"

"You mean you are a pig from the Indian hills?" she suggested without audible emotion.

"Nay, beloved, I mean this: That as I said a thousand times before I say again, I will pull kings off their thrones and fill dry wells with their carcasses until there are no more kings to stand between me and my heart's desire; but cease I never will until you admit you are mine!"

"Until the moon falls out of the sky then!"

"What are the doings of the moon to me!" the Sikh retorted scornfully. "Let him* fall, and we shall have good darkness for great deeds! You shall be mine, whatever happens to the moon!"

"*Bukra fil mishmish!*" † she quoted, laughing. It was clear that she was at least amused by his protestations.

"What need have we of moons when two eyes such as thine can burn up night?" he boomed. "I shall see to fight by their radiance! I will make you a necklace out of the milk-white teeth of emperors whom I shall slay for your sake, and all the women in the world shall squint with jealousy! Consider a while, beloved—did I not swear to

*The moon is masculine in Hindu mythology.

†Literally, "tomorrow there will be apricots." An Arab proverb referring to a princess, who put off a disagreeable suitor from day to day by promising to marry him when the apricots were ripe; but each night she plucked the ripe ones from the tree.

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you before that I would come again to find you? Here I am!"

"Here to clean the boots of Jimgrim," she suggested.

"Here in obedience to Destiny!"

He almost said Karma, but remembered in the nick of time not to use the Hindu term. Not that it would have mattered, for she wouldn't have understood what Karma meant.

"And here art thou, O heart's desire, also at the call of that same Destiny! But you doubt?"

"Surely!"

"Put me to a test then! Come! Let us make a plan together. We Orakzai Pathans are good at plans, and better yet at forcing them through broken teeth down the throats of the fools who oppose us! How about this Avenger now, who thinks he owns you? Shall we make a corpse of him and claim his heritage? How would you like to be queen of this part of Arabia for a beginning—just for a beginning?"

She answered with a low laugh, no such fool as to believe a word of it, but nevertheless delighted, for immeasurable though a man's desire may be, it is at least a compliment that he should seek to give his lady-love a glimpse of it; and where there is all that smoke an element of fire lies underneath. And who should blame a woman of that incorrigible land who took advantage of a such vainglorious boaster?

HOWEVER, that was as far as the intrigue could go just then, for Grim's whistle announced that time was up. Ayisha mounted behind me, because her own beast was hardly in fit condition to be towed, so furiously had she ridden to meet Grim. I did not invite her on to my beast, but I put my foot on his neck and swung into the saddle as he rose, and she vaulted up behind me with a rifle in her right hand—not such an easy feat by a long way as it looks on paper.

She knew Grim was an American, but I suppose she had no reason for suspecting me; and maybe I had learned the part of an educated Indian from Lahore fairly well by that time. I couldn't have fooled another Indian for a minute, but her native shrewdness wasn't experienced enough to detect any slight mistakes I made from time to time.

And it is a pecularity of that land that however strong, influential, wealthy or even courageous an Indian may be, the Bedouins regard him as an inferior, whether Moslem or not. Our seventeen thieves were not Bedouins, but men of El-Kalil, who hold themselves superior to Bedouin and Fellahin alike—superior, in fact, to all Eastern peoples and the equals of the conquering white; they drew no such social distinction, and judged men more by personal merit.

They knew me for an American and a trusted friend of Grim, who had beaten their champion Mujrim in fair fight; and they recognized in Narayan Singh a Sikh, who was also Grim's friend, and a man of parts. But Ayisha knew no such standards of comparison as they, and her attitude toward me was that of a duchess to her confidential butler—if you can imagine a dusty duchess in black cotton, with a rifle in one hand, jumping up on to the butler's camel.

I was at a disadvantage, having her behind me. I like to watch the face of any one I'm talking to, the study of faces being a hobby of mine that I have found as expensive in the long run and as profitable in the end as collecting postage stamps or curios. For it takes you a long time to learn what shades of expression mean, and as you back your judgment you pay accordingly; but what you do learn finally can't be found in books or filched from you by competitors.

She put her left hand over my left shoulder, ostensibly to keep her balance, although she needed that as much as a cat needs crutches on a wall. It was a shapely, slender hand with henna'd nails, and there was a ring on the middle finger with an uncut sapphire set in it that I dare say would bring two or three thousand dollars on Fifth Avenue. I didn't pay much attention to it until the fingers began tugging at my whiskers that were growing black and unkempt after nearly a week without shaving. It isn't considered complimentary to play tricks with a man's beard in Moslem lands, but I let that pass. She tugged until I turned my face half around toward her before she spoke.

"O *Miyan*," she said then, using the rather contemptuous term by which they address all Indians, "you are a doctor, for I have seen you use the knife and give the physic. How much magic do you know? All *Miyans* know magic."

It was true I had charge of the medicine-chest, but if ever there was an unqualified surgeon or physician, I am he. I can skin a

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dead beast, having had experience of that; and when it comes to lancing boils or opening an abscess with a safety-razor blade, I have the stomach for it and can cut deep. But I give copious castor-oil for all complaints, and am seldom twice in demand by the same patient. As for magic—my hands are calloused and not subtle; I can't even shuffle a pack of cards without making a hopeless mess of it. But it doesn't always pay to confess ignorance, unless you're sure of being found out.

"I know magic when I see it. There is magic in your eyes, O lady Ayisha," I answered guardedly. It is generally pretty safe to pay a compliment when you haven't any other answer ready.

"To whom are you taking all this baggage?" she demanded next.

Only the enfranchised woman sticks to what a man considers is the point; but I've noticed that the female sex does keep a point in mind as a general rule, for all that, and I answered guardedly again—

"Ask Jimgrim."

"Bah! As well ask the desert! Jimgrim listens and never speaks. I asked one of Ali Baba's sons, and he said the goods are for some one on a mountain-side. He thought that a clever answer. Jmil Ras lives on a mountain-side; are the goods for him?"

"They are not my goods," I answered. "How should I know? I go wherever Jimgrim leads." And thinking to turn the tables on her I asked a question, "Who is Jmil Ras?"

"Jmil Ras is a great magician. I know the goods are for him."

"Some people know what isn't true. How do you know?"

"Because it is known that that oaf Mujrim came and went, escaping the Avenger's men by the thickness of the shadow of his camel's smell. If they had caught him, he would have been made to talk; but spies were sent after him, and it is known that Ali Baba began buying goods at once in El-Kalil. Were the goods not for Jmil Ras?"

"How should I know?"

"*Malaish!* The Avenger will take the goods. None can prevent, for he lies between here and the mountain where Jmil Ras has entrenched himself."

"Entrenched?" said I.

"He has dug great ditches. Is there magic among these camel-loads?"

I thought of the quicksilver. Whoever has used that stuff as much as I have, and seen it absorb the gold out of broken quartz, may be forgiven for talking like an old-time alchemist.

"Magic?" said I. "Woman, there is stuff among those loads that at a word from me will either poison the very devils in the pit or turn rocks into money! It is metal, and yet it runs to and fro like water; it is liquid, and yet so heavy that it sinks like lead and will not mix with water! It shines like burnished silver, yet can not be coined; and a drop of it will make the teeth fall from the jaws of a giant!"

"That is good stuff," she answered. "Give me some of it!"

You'll have full right to laugh at me, you fellows, if you see fit, after you have ridden camel-back under the stars with a pretty girl's hand on your shoulder, her breath in your ear, and her soft voice coaxing you. I'm no Don Juan, nor no Saint Anthony—merely a fellow who has had that rare experience. You may take it from me unreservedly that there are circumstances and conditions in which it is easier to keep your head and to refuse requests.

"What do you want it for?" I countered.

"It is enough that I do want it. Am not I, Ayisha, your friend of old?"

I laughed at that.

"You're the woman," said I, "who stuck a knife into my leg when I was fighting Mujrim!"

"Oh, as for that—*malaish!*" she answered. "That is a little thing forgotten. Has the wound not healed?"

"There is only a scar there now," I assured her. "Do you recognize all your friends by the dagger-marks you make on them?"

Her answer to that was unexpected, even if characteristic. She withdrew her left hand, and in less than half a second I could feel her dagger's point against my ribs.

"Now, *Miyan!*" she exclaimed with a hard little laugh. "I need thy magic! Does life seem sweet?"

"The magic won't work without me to give it orders," I retorted, trying to speak evenly; but that dagger-point tickled as well as pricked.

She pushed it in a fraction of an inch, and the thing was getting beyond a joke.

"Give it your orders, then, *Miyan!* Put

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a piece of it in my hand and tell it to obey me!"

"It is necessary first to make a spell," said I. "Unless I wave my arms to summon devils the magic won't work."

"Summon them!"

She pricked me again with the dagger to emphasize her authority, and I think she was rather surprized that an Indian should act as I did then. Did you ever try acrobatic stunts on the back of a pacing camel? It was my first attempt at anything of that sort, but she was at a disadvantage too, in that her perch was even less secure than mine. I spread both arms outward to their full extent, as if to summon devils from all corners of the universe—leaned back, face upward, as if praying to the stars—seized her suddenly by neck and shoulders—and yanked her, heels over head, into my lap so suddenly that she had not even time to drop her rifle or drive the dagger into me.

Having her in both arms then it was a comparatively easy task to take the dagger away, although she bit until her teeth met in my arm; and when I loosed her a little to let her breathe she tried to use the rifle as a club to brain me with.

Meanwhile, the camel didn't help matters in the least. He objected to acrobatics, and from the way he carried on all the devils I was supposed to have been summoning might have been torturing his stomach. When Narayan Singh rode close and seized the head-rope the silly brute pulled backward trying to jerk his own head off, and kicked out at random, north, south, east and west. However, we got going again; but by that time I brought up the rear of the procession, with Narayan Singh acting escort on the left flank.

"Now, you little cannibal," said I at last, "suppose you tell me what you want that magic for!"

"Wait till I turn the Avenger loose on you!" she panted.

"All right," I said, "I'll wait. Meanwhile, let's go forward and talk with Jimgrim."

If Grim was at all aware of what had been happening, he made no sign. It wasn't unusual for a camel somewhere in the line to start squealing and fighting, and no one took much notice as a rule unless he happened to be too close to the brute's teeth. Grim, away off in the lead, might easily have failed to notice the disturbance. Ayisha did not propose that he should learn the details of it now.

"Peace, *Miyan!*" she exclaimed, trying to laugh. "I was only joking."

"Next time you joke, then, do it with your lips, and keep your dagger and teeth for eating with!" said I.

"Give me back the dagger."

Instead, I whistled and tossed it to Narayan Singh, who caught it deftly by the hilt. She shuddered when I whistled, for most Arabs and all Bedouins regard that as the devil's music.

"The Pathan shall keep it for a love-token," I said. "Men of his race would rather have that sort of thing than a kiss. Come on, now, tell me what you wanted magic for!"

But instead of answering my question, she called to her amorous Pathan in the strange, reverberating voice with which Eastern women have spurred their men to fight ever since Cain killed Abel.

"Come closer, if you love me! Come and stick that dagger into this fool! Quick! It is the test!"

I had dropped my riding-stick in the scuffle when I yanked her from behind me, and a camel doesn't officially recognize any other accelerator; yet flight was obviously the only way to save the Sikh from a predicament. He couldn't very well pretend to try to kill me without making himself ridiculous, nor refuse without swallowing his boasts. So I tried to make the beast gallop by kicking and swearing at him, which works occasionally.

But Narayan Singh saw the same way out of the predicament that I did. He circled about and approached from the rear, as if intending to stab me in the back; but it was my camel's rump that stopped the dagger-point, and no new-fangled racing auto ever leapt into speed more suddenly than that ill-used, ill-tempered mount of mine.

We had overtaken Grim in less than sixty seconds, with the Sikh still brandishing the dagger two lengths in the rear, and to keep up appearances I claimed Grim's protection. So did she, and Grim transferred her to his camel, which gave Narayan Singh enough excuse to fall to the rear again.

Grim is not given to overlooking bets. He is fonder of listening than of asking questions; and he likes to let events explain themselves rather than render them

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obscure by being too inquisitive. But not even an Arab could resent interrogation in those circumstances. He held her in his lap the same way I had done, with a quiet eye on her rifle to make sure she should take no pot-shot at me, and without halting —because then old Ali Baba and the gang would all have swarmed about us—asked for my explanation first.

He might as well have wanted pudding before soup, or a seat at a show without the ticket. It couldn't be done.

"Jimgrim," she interrupted, "why do you travel with two miserable Indians? Ali Baba and his men are bad enough, but the other two creatures put you to open shame! Take my rifle and shoot that fool, or else let me do it!"

The moon glistened on their faces, and he smiled at her exactly as if she were a child.

"That *Miyan* there," she went on, "can make magic. He says he has stuff hidden among the loads that will turn the mountains into money and make men's teeth fall out. Kill him before he makes magic against you and me; then we will take his stuff and send Jmil Ras some food that has been treated with it. When that is done, we will turn Abu Kem into money and bribe the British to go away from Palestine. Then we will kill all the Jews, and Saoud the Avenger shall be king in Jerusalem. I will poison his other wives, and I shall be a great queen."

"Suppose instead of that we make the *Miyan* work for us?" he suggested kindly. "I don't know how to use that magic stuff of his. Do you?"

"Give him the bastinado then! Make him obedient! He is much too impudent and independent for a *Miyan!*" she insisted.

"That is because he knows magic perhaps. All magicians are proud. Besides," he added, smiling again, "I never bastinado any one in advance. What were you and he quarreling about?"

"I told you. I want some of his magic."

"What for?"

"To poison Jmil Ras."

"Why?"

"I hate him!"

"What harm has he done you?"

"He has set himself up against my husband the Avenger," she answered, but not very promptly; there was a distinct pause while she considered what answer to make, and Grim noticed it all right.

"They say Jmil Ras is rather young and handsome," he answered. "They also say he has ability, and isn't married. Now, if he were to overthrow the Avenger, he might consider marriage with the youngest and best-looking of the Avenger's wives. Isn't that so?"

"What of it?"

"I am wondering why you should hate him so much in the circumstances."

"I hate him because he is more insolent than this Indian *Miyan* of yours!"

"You spoke with him, and he insulted you?"

"No. How should I speak with him?"

"You have seen him, though?"

"Yes."

"Now let's have that all over again. Jmil Ras is good-looking and unmarried. He is clever, and you say he has set himself up against the Avenger, who is sufficiently afraid of him to send for me. Have you ever sent Jmil Ras any messages?"

She did not answer.

"Has it ever occurred to you, Ayisha, that your position as the Avenger's fourth wife is perhaps a little insecure?"

"It was you, Jimgrim, who arranged my marriage to him; you ought to know."

"Let me see—I think you can't write, can you?"

"No."

"That makes it awkward, doesn't it. People who have to send messages by word of mouth are sometimes at the mercy of the messenger, eh? The Avenger sent you to me, so I take it he doesn't suspect yet that you've been communicating with Jmil Ras. But I suspect it!"

"You would suspect the Prophet of Al-Islam!" she retorted.

"That may be," he answered smiling.

"He was a great man, but I'm familiar with his history. He and Julius Caesar and Napoleon were all on the watch for opportunity. Now, I'm not blaming you, Ayisha, for I know some of the circumstances; but if you want me to help you as I did once before, hadn't you better take me into your confidence?"

"That *Miyan* is listening."

"He's a magician. Perhaps he could find out what you know in any case. Better not run the risk of his using that magic of his.

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Didn't you offer to help Jmil Ras if he would marry you?"

I expect the accuracy of Grim's deduction seemed pretty much like magic to her. Add to that the fact that he had helped her once before in dire extremity—his almost tender friendliness—the comfort of being held in the arms of a man with such a name as Jimgrim had earned for keeping other people's confidences—then moonlight, and the whole romantic scene—and it would have been a wonder if she hadn't 'fessed up.

"It was Ibrahim ben Ah," she admitted suddenly, rushing the story now, to get it over and done with.

"The old warrior who commanded the camel-corps of Ali Higg of Petra?"

"Yes. He deserted to the Avenger, but wasn't treated with sufficient dignity, so he deserted again to Jmil Ras. Before he went away he talked with me. *Wallahi!* it was his fault. He swore he would make Jmil Ras a great one, and that if I would persuade the Avenger's men to desert to Jmil Ras, he, Ibrahim ben Ah, would guarantee on his honor that I should be the first wife of Jmil Ras when the time came. So I agreed. But Jmil Ras sent me word by the mouth of a wife of one of his men that he would have nothing to do with any such arrangement—may Allah change his face!"

"And had you already persuaded any of the Avenger's men to desert?"

"No. I had had no opportunity. Jmil Ras had the impudence to tell that woman to tell me to mind my own business! May Allah turn him into worms! I will teach him to despise me!"

Grim glanced in my direction.

"Does he sound like an Arab to you?" he asked.

"Or an Australian?" said I.

"What is an Australian?" Ayisha demanded.

"A member of a strangely free and independent, brave and disrespectful sect," Grim answered, smiling pleasantly.

CHAPTER VIII

"Miyan, you are a great magician!"

THAT dawn we bivouacked in a fiumara, which, as I think I have explained before, is a formation peculiar to that country —part valley, part dry river-bed—a roaring torrent for a few days in the year, and all the rest of the time a waste of sand and boulders with a muddy water-hole or two at distant intervals.

They wander across the land snake-fashion, roughly east and west, and what with the banks being high in places, so that men and camels can lie hidden, and the all-important water, they play no inconsiderable part in tribal warfare, which is endemic and deadly.

The water-holes being so scarce, the places where they are known to be are almost like a crossroads, and the hoof and human foot prints give an erroneous suggestion of incessant traffic on a large scale. But traffic is actually scarce, no man being fool enough to travel except at the spur of need, since whatever superior force catches sight of a smaller one will certainly pursue and plunder, if not murder.

But being by that time near the indefinite boundary line of the ruling chief whom we were visiting by invitation, we pitched the little tents in an elbow of the fiumara near a water-hole without much anxiety, taking no more precaution than to post one man on either bank as soon as we had eaten breakfast, or supper, whichever you like to call the meal after a night march. And I'm fairly well convinced that both men fell asleep within five minutes, although they managed it sitting upright.

Grim went to sleep serenely in his tent, after putting Narayan Singh in charge, who was to make over in turn to me at the end of four hours; and it was the Sikh's military instinct that saved us from ridicule, if nothing worse, and enabled us to turn the tables on fortune.

Within the length of a furlong there the fiumara curved exactly like the figure S, but there were so many bleached white boulders just above the spot where we pitched that the bed was impracticable, and any one using the course for a road would be obliged to climb out and make a detour, unless he cared to risk breaking a camel's legs.

I don't think Narayan Singh heard anything. He was just so trained in military ways, and so suspicious of new ground that he couldn't keep still. He came and shook me awake at the end of fifteen minutes instead of four hours, and instead of swearing at him, as I had indubitable right to do, based on inviolable custom, I sat up and laughed at the chorus of snores rising up to heaven from our bivouac like the music of a sawmill.

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Grim, in the tent next mine, was snoring as loud as any one; and the camels fifty yards away were making a weird row of their own; for, having only one more march ahead of us, we had fed them the remaining corn, and I suppose they thought they were singing songs. You never heard such a trombone-voiced menagerie.

When I had done laughing and had lit a cigaret, my friend the Sikh saw fit to explain himself.

"Even hogs need watching, *sahib!* Look at them! Some lie belly-upward, others belly-down, but it is all one whether a knife strikes before or behind. The hog dies when his blood flows."

"I've heard you snore a time or two!" I answered.

"That is as maybe. Did you hear our Jimgrim put me in charge of this night-mare for four hours?"

"I did. The job's yours. I'm not stealing it!"

"You heard, eh? Then you admit that my honor is involved? Well and good. Come and help me scout for a stone-throw or two."

"Why? Are you afraid of ghosts?" I asked him.

"Neither of us two are men to whom fear should be lightly imputed," he answered. "But call me an old woman if you will. Only come and scout with me. I have an intuition."

Well, I believe in intuitions. I have had them. I believe that if a man can only school himself to follow intuition and not be turned aside by second thoughts or other folks' opinions, he will be as safe in all circumstances as a dollar in the U. S. Treasury. I put up no further argument, but rose with a yawn and followed him.

Now I would have taken to the high bank, being naturally lazy and averse to scrambling over rough rocks when a shorter, smoother trail will serve. But the Sikh led straight on up the winding fiumara, and, when we reached the roughest maze of boulders, added difficulty on to inconvenience by warning me to make no noise. For all my size and weight I can go quietly when I choose, having learned that lesson painfully when stalking game for the pot in many hot lands.

And a Sikh, of course, can make less noise than a shadow, as the Germans discovered in Flanders. We could have been seen from above quite easily, but not from in front, for we kept cover behind the stones as we advanced; and I think few animals, and no man not deliberately laying for us, would have heard a sound.

The whole performance smacked more and more of the ridiculous to me, as we crawled around the turns, and peered, and saw nothing but jumbled up white rocks. But Narayan Singh was set on his self-appointed task like a cheetah that winds black buck, and he never paused for more than a second or two to make sure.

Most men can learn to scout slowly, but that fellow can go unseen over rough ground nearly as fast as a man walks on the level, and keeping up with him was no joke. We came within ten yards of a small panther and surprized him out of his sleep, which may give some idea of how much noise we made.

But nothing whatever happened, except that the panther spat at us and hesitated for a moment whether to show fight or run, until we reached the last bend of the figure S and could see nearly straight ahead up the bed of the fiumara for maybe half a mile. Then Narayan Singh, who was about two lengths ahead of me, suddenly lay quite flat, and whispered.

"*Kabadar!*" *

I crawled up beside him, and he didn't know I was there until he turned to look. Nobody ever gave me a medal for anything, so I don't know what it feels like to be kissed on both cheeks on parade; but the smile of a good scout's approval that he flashed at me was worth more than the stock certificate I bought with my first savings, and by the way subsequently burned as worthless.

Now of course, we have all met folk who say there is nothing in intuition. They will argue about it endlessly; and, funnily enough, they are always the same ones who maintain that an animal has instinct and can't think. Fortunately, in spite of all the modern means for clubbing, coaxing, perverting and trapping us until we are willing to admit that black is white—or if not that it ought to be—there is still a remnant of the sweet old theory that each of us may have his own opinion without being slandered or imprisoned for it; and it suits my disposition to go down, if I must, with that ship firing all bow guns. I say that

*Take care!

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intuition is worth more than immediate evidence. I have proved it repeatedly to my own satisfaction, and I don't care a —— what the prophets of all dreary science say.

THERE was nothing whatever in sight when we reached the end of that rock-pile and lay staring up the bed of the fiumara, nothing, I mean, from which a dogmatist could have deduced the neighborhood of danger. If I had wanted to, I might have laughed at Narayan Singh, or have called him to account for robbing me of the sleep I was entitled to.

But my intuition took the form of trusting his, and although a score of birds were going about their normal business, some wild pigs were rooting unconcernedly a hundred yards ahead, and even our friend the panther stopped to lick a paw and look back at us; I was satisfied, without reasoning at all about it, to lie there and watch.

We lay for fifteen or twenty minutes without speaking or moving, while the flies made breakfast off us, and the first reward of patience reached us from the rear. Ayisha could walk like a cat when she chose, but—equally cat and tigresslike—could make plenty of noise when she thought she wasn't watched. A tiger going through the jungle, unless hunting, makes more noise than a buffalo. Knowing that she had escaped from the bivouac unseen, she was taking no further precautions, and we were aware of her clambering over the rock-pile from behind long before she had a chance of seeing us. It was a simple matter then to drop down between boulders and hide ourselves completely.

She followed the left-hand side of the fiumara, where most of the rocks were not so difficult to negotiate. She seemed in no hurry, and didn't carry her rifle, which I took for proof that she intended to return to the bivouac after accomplishing her present mission; it seemed likely, too, that she was on her way to meet a friend or she would certainly have brought her weapon.

A little to the front of us on our left hand, on top of the bank of the fiumara, stood a dead thorn-tree, so blasted by age and hot wind that very little of it was left except the twisted trunk and one long branch sticking upward at an angle. However, there was another, shorter branch that apparently had fallen a long time ago from higher up and got caught in the big one, for it lay nearly parallel along it. I wouldn't have noticed the tree and its branches particularly if Ayisha hadn't glanced up at it more than once, as if she expected to keep her assignation there.

But, seeing she did look up at it with obvious interest, I studied the tree carefully through a crack under the bellies of two boulders. The only peculiarity except its age and withered branches was a filthy old rag, once white, that was tied and twisted to the upper end of the short branch that lay along the other.

And that wasn't so very peculiar. It is customary in that part of the world when a man is buried to tie rags and similar personal souvenirs to the nearest place to which they can be attached. If the dead man was something of a saint, or in other ways important, his grave becomes in course of time a fluttering jumble of odds and ends. Murder being the usual thing, such graves are everywhere; so a soiled rag in a tree wasn't anything to speculate about.

However, Ayisha climbed the bank and went to the tree, but said no prayers, as she probably would have done if keeping tryst with a dead friend. Instead, she illustrated one of the soundest rules of scouting, which is that if you want to signal unobserved, it is better to remove an object that has been standing all along in clear view than to set up a new one. It applies with equal force to hunting. Animals as well as humans are so constituted that they notice new things much more readily than they miss the old.

She didn't wave the rag, but simply laid the branch on the ground and climbed back into the fiumara, where she sat down within thirty feet of us, with her back against a rock, so as to be unseen from the direction of our bivouac but visible at once to any one coming toward us down the straight.

I could not see that the signal was answered in any way, but at the end of about five minutes thirty men on camels rounded the bend a furlong in front of us and came straight on, led by a fine looking, slim fellow, whom I presently recognized as the Avenger's brother.

We had only met him once, when Grim checkmated the Avenger in the affair with Ali Higg at Abu Lissan; but he rode with a

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rather rare alertness and hair-trigger way of glancing to right and left that were unmistakable when considered along with his gorgeously striped cloak and the red and green and gold bands on his head-dress.

He did not pay Ayisha any too much deference, and he and his men made their camels kneel and settled down comfortably in the shade of the high bank before any of them noticed her. Then one of the men called to her to approach; but the Avenger's brother countermanded that, and when he had drunk his fill from one of the goat-skin water-bags he crossed over to where she sat. She remained seated, and he stood throughout the interview.

There was no formal greeting of any kind, and as both of them dropped their voices low it was extremely difficult to catch what was said at a distance of thirty paces. I decided to take the risk of crawling closer, hoping that any sound I might make would be mistaken for that of some small animal. It was easy enough to manage without being seen, because of the way the stones were heaped on one another.

Seeing my intention, Narayan Singh made a gesture with his head in the direction of the bivouac, and started at once to crawl back and waken Grim. It didn't need two of us to listen, but team-work like that calls for something more than heathenism. I have heard Sikhs described as heathens, and have known folk who so describe them, who would have horned in out of curisoity to listen, leaving events to take care of themselves.

"I found Jimgrim," I heard Ayisha say, "and he had received the Avenger's message. He was on his way to answer the summons. But he has those thieves with him, and two Indian magicians, and the thieves have magic for Jmil Ras hidden in the camel-loads. If Jmil Ras ever gets that magic there will be no hope for the Avenger."

"Where is Jimgrim?" he demanded after a moment's pause, during which he may or may not have been reviewing with alarm the tribal tales of witchcraft and devilry. I could not see his face.

"He sleeps near by—just down the fiumara behind me."

"How many men has he?"

"Nineteen; but he himself is as good as nineteen more," she answered.

"Has he posted men on watch?"

"Two, in good positions, but I think they sleep, for neither of them saw me come away."

"If they are awake can they see in every direction?"

"Yes, except up the fiumara, where none would be likely to come because of the rocks. No camel could pass that way, and the men on watch can't see because of the turns."

The Avenger's brother paused again, and through a gap between the rocks I could see him stroke his beard reflectively.

"If I send men to seize those watchmen, they might see my men first and raise the alarm," he said at last, and I began to hold my breath with that stupid involuntary effort that is first cousin to driving an auto from the rear seat. "So we must leave the camels and go down the fiumara," he continued, pausing again to stroke his beard and think. "They are asleep, eh? We can take our time. Do you think they will fight, if suddenly awakened, or are those thieves likely to surrender at discretion?"

"They will fight!" she answered promptly. "They are the worst firebrands out of El-Kalil."

"*Wallahi!* That is too bad," he exclaimed. "Jimgrim must not be harmed on any account, for he travels under my brother's promise of protection. But nothing was said about those thieves——"

"Who, moreover, seek to carry goods for Jmil Ras—and magic—magic that will turn the mountains into gold and make the Avenger's teeth fall out! You must capture them."

"Nevertheless, if we come on them, and they show fight, and Jimgrim takes the part of his friends, as he has the name of doing, how shall we keep him from harm?" he answered, resuming the stroking of his beard. "*Wallahi!* But this is an awkward business."

"You would do no harm by seizing Jimgrim first," she advised him. "That would not break the law of host and guest, for you would have saved his life. He could be set free afterward."

"I wonder what my brother would say to that?"

"He would agree! I know the Avenger."

"Peace, woman! You have only known him a few weeks—I a lifetime. Let me think."

I began to breathe sensibly again, remembering how the Avenger and that man

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in front of me had spared the life of Ali Higg, their deadliest enemy, at a time when they had him completely in the power. The promise to spare his life had been won by a trick, but they had observed the promise without as much as considering the alternative. The habitual takers of human life and prosecutors of relentless blood-feuds are not by a long shot the worst men in the world.

"Jimgrim must be separated from those thieves," he said at last, "for if not, they will claim his protection, and he ours; whereas, if we get him away from them they can all be in the next world before he knows it. And as for magic—the more of it that Jimgrim can dig out of those loads the better. Let the loads be his, if he claims them, but those thieves have cumbered the earth too long already. Go you back, woman. Waken Jimgrim quietly, and persuade him to return with you to this place, saying that one man waits to speak with him alone. Bring him along the high ground, and my men will use the fiumara."

"But what if he brings two or three?"

"No matter. I will keep a handful here to deal with any bodyguard he brings. While Jimgrim is kept talking here my men will attend to the other matter. It is time the crows were given a good meal!"

She argued a little yet. I don't think she relished her job much, or that she was any too sure of luring Grim into the trap. But he cut short her arguments abruptly with a string of sulfurous oaths and turned his back on her to go and instruct his men.

So she began rather slowly and reluctantly to climb back over the tumbled rocks. And as soon as her back was toward me I began very cautiously to follow her, thankful that she went so slowly, because I had the double task of keeping hidden from both front and rear. I was minded to have a talk with her before either of us reached Grim's tent, but not so soon that she should be able to shout an alarm to the Avenger's brother.

So we made one turn and the half of another before I called a halt. There was an enormous round boulder in the middle of the fiumara bed at that point, and she was just about to feel her way around it, stepping gingerly from rock to rock, when I called out.

"*Ya sit* Ayisha!" *

She stopped as if shot, saw me, and made an instinctive dive into her clothes for a weapon. But all she had was a dagger—not the one that I had taken from her and tossed to Narayan Singh, but a Persian thing with a curved blade. She drew it and showed her teeth pretty much as our friend the panther had behaved an hour before.

It was pretty to watch the changing emotions on her face as I drew nearer. Her first instinctive intention to kill me if she could gave place to realization of the hopelessness, as well as the uselessness of that; next to almost hysterical despair; and then to cunning, and a flashing smile as sweet as sunshine on the morning dew. Lord! But she was pretty when she beamed at you that way.

However, I kept both eyes on her and trusted to luck for my footing, for she might have thrown that dagger, and I've seen her throw one mighty straight, as I hope to tell one of these days.

"*Mashallah!* Why this secrecy?" she said with a laugh as soon as I drew close. But she kept the dagger in her hand, and if she had been anything other than a woman I would have drawn my pistol. Wisdom and self-respect don't always seem to run in double harness, do they?

"I knew all along that you were there listening," she said mockingly. "You made more noise than a frightened horse!"

I knew that wasn't true, but decided to test it all the same.

"You might have seen me coming out of the tent," said I, "for it was difficult to hide just then; but after that I thought I followed pretty well."

"Your magic didn't work, O *Miyan!* I looked back and saw you four times between the tents and that tree, and I could hear you coming behind me all the way."

Well, that was just like a woman. I can't imagine why she chose to lie about it, unless to reduce my conceit and make me more amenable to argument.

"No matter," I answered. "I heard what you said to the Avenger's brother, and what he said to you. That is the main point."

At that she lied again, remarkably readily. I'm not blaming her any more than Grim did at any time. I like the wench, and dare say she will go far under the new régime just dawning in Arab lands. But she had learned political ambition with

*O lady Ayisha.

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no more leaven of redeeming altruism than Grim had been able to teach her in less than a dozen days. Moreover, she had had time, and lots of opportunity to forget the lesson learned from him; so now, caught in a predicament, she lied as her ancestresses always did.

"You must not make trouble between me and Jimgrim," she said, pleading—but keeping the dagger in full view still. "You are a *Miyan* and do not understand. There was a plot to capture Jimgrim, and to render him helpless by killing all his men, so that he would have to obey the Avenger whether he will or not. But I love Jimgrim. I am on his side. *Wallahi!* I would die for his sake. Therefore I pretended to agree to the plot, and came to meet Jimgrim in the desert. Then, this morning, I kept the tryst here to make sure of everything, for fear of losing Jimgrim's confidence by giving him a false alarm. And now I go to warn him."

"*Bismillah!* He ought to be grateful to you!" said I.

"You think so?"

"Why not? But for you the trap might have been set far more effectually. Let us go now and wake the weazel from his sleep lest the rabbits catch him."

"Are you sneering at me, *Miyan?* Have a care!"

"Who would sneer at such a beautiful princess?" I answered. "By the whiskers of the Prophet, it was your cleverness that shed light in a dark place. Come along, let us find Jimgrim."

But she stood at bay still, with her back against the bulge of the great boulder, and I think she would have stuck her dagger into me if the footing had been better, and I less alert.

"Are you and I enemies or friends?" she demanded.

"All Jimgrim's friends are mine," said I.

"I suspect you," she answered. "I think you are like an adder lying in the sand that bites the camels' heels. You are one of those who speak fair and act foul."

Nothing like seeing yourself as a woman sees you, is there! But I'm better at self-defense with fists than tongue, and rather irreverently prone to laugh at criticism.

"I don't think you need feel afraid of me," I said; and she tossed up her chin as if she were the Queen of Sheba putting one of King Solomon's court attendants in his place.

"Afraid of you? It is you who should fear me, *Miyan!* I am well able to care for myself, but you are——"

"I have the name of a magician," I interrupted.

But one of the strangest things in the world is that people who believe in black magic and witchcraft also believe that they can overawe the magician or the witch, much as if a prizefighter with gloves on should threaten a man in an armored aeroplane.

"Use your magic the way I bid you, then, or you shall suffer for it!" she retorted. "Use it to protect Jimgrim now without setting him against me!"

"So be it, O lady Ayisha," I answered; and I began to make passes with my hands, and to quote about all the Latin I remember from my school-days.

"*Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum!*" I remarked by way of final emphasis; and there is a sort of galloping thump to that line when you say it properly that commands respect. She was distinctly a shade paler by the time I was through.

"Go along ahead of me now," I said, "and judge for yourself whether the spell has worked or not. And afterward, if you are satisfied, you must give me credit for obliging you."

So she went ahead, full of mingled pride, superstitious fear and curiosity; and I chuckled in her wake, for I was sure of three things—that Narayan Singh had wakened Grim long ago; that Grim had already made arrangements for the protection of Ali Baba and his men; and that Grim was the last man who would "set himself" or be set against Ayisha for any consideration. He isn't given to petty personalities, or to complaining of his tools, but plays up to the best instincts of friend and enemy alike.

But I never suspected how perfectly he had turned the trick for me, nor what prodigious respect Ayisha would have for my magic as the result. Having lost time talking, she hurried down the fiumara, leaping like a doe from rock to rock, and I had a hard time keeping pace. In fact, I failed to do it, and she turned the last corner more than fifty yards ahead of me. There she stopped dead, and when I overtook her she stared at me open-mouthed, saying nothing for about a minute.

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Grim was gone. So were the tents. So were the camels. So were Ali Baba and his men, and Narayan Singh. There wasn't a trace or a sound of them, and except for a few deep scratches in the sand you could hardly tell there had been a bivouac pitched there.

I don't approve of too much crowing over a victory, especially when nine-tenths of it is due to another man's quick wit; but I couldn't resist the impulse then.

"Does the spell seem to have worked, princess?" I asked triumphantly.

"*Miyan*, you are a great magician!" she answered. "You must obey me now in all things, and we will send Jmil Ras to Jehannum. After that I will be a great queen!"

CHAPTER IX

"Ask the camel of Jmil Ras!"

WELL, that was a fine plan of Ayisha's; but as Grim must have done a heap of swift guesswork and would likely be grateful for hard facts, my first business was to find him. I thought it probable he would hide somewhere and wait for me before deciding on his gambit; but what he actually had done was to stow the men and camels in a hollow about three hundred yards to the left as you stood facing up the fiumara, with Narayan Singh on guard to keep them in there, and to come back himself in search of me.

He peered down over the bank from between two rocks just as I was starting off to look for him in the opposite direction—having guessed wrongly that he would follow along old camel-prints in order to gain time by making his pursuers stop and think.

"Are you running away with Ayisha?" he called down. "Ayisha, I'm surprized; I thought that you and I were friends!"

"Does he seem set against you yet?" I asked her, and she almost purred at me like a fed cat.

We climbed up the bank, and in a hurry I told Grim all I knew of the Avenger's brother's plan, giving Ayisha's version of her connection with it because she was listening and checking me up. But I contrived to wink at him without her seeing, and Ayisha was the only person fooled.

I like to watch Grim make his mind up when he has all the facts. It reminds you of the breech-bolt action of a quick-firing gun that one moment is all wide open waiting for a charge, and the next shuts tight with a click and is ready for instant business. You can almost hear the click. The expression of his face changes very little, and he says less; but you know that a deal has been closed, so to speak, and that nothing remains to do but follow him to the conclusion.

"Coming down the fiumara, eh?"

He cast his eyes swiftly over the landscape, and the general drift of that thought was easy to understand. As I explained, whoever used the fiumara for a road would have to leave it where the boulder-cluttered figure S began and make a detour, which was really a short cut. You could see where hundreds of men had done that very thing; and as humans are like cattle in following the line of least exertion, the track had come to look almost like a road, leading in a wide semicircle along the lowest level. The head of a man on camel-back would hardly have been visible at any point along it to any one peering over the rim of the fiumara.

"Come on!" said Grim, and led the way to the hollow where the men all waited.

Then he sent Narayan Singh on foot to hide himself on top of the bank where the figure S curved toward us, with orders to signal the movements of the men below. He was to raise his left fist once for each man he could see, and his right fist to mean that they were coming forward. If he raised his rifle that would mean that something unforeseen was happening, in which case Grim would send a messenger to him to learn particulars.

We waited for Narayan Singh to take up position, old Ali Baba fuming impatiently because Grim wouldn't order a retreat.

"By Allah, Jimgrim, hasn't the Sikh told you that those are the Avenger's men? They will cut my sons' throats and steal this merchandise as quick as look at it! We have good camels, man; let us run, and come at Jmil Ras by another way. I have my bargain to keep!"

"You made a bargain to obey me!" Grim answered, and the old man left off talking. His sons and grandsons were as full of fear as he, but perfectly content to fulfill any terms their sire had committed them to. They were tough, and no observers of any commandments that the West pays lip-service to, except the Fifth, and if their days are not long in the land in consequence some

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sort of explanation should be due them from the missionaries.

Narayan Singh shot up his left fist twenty-nine times, and Grim led forward. Our destination was the blasted tree from which Ayisha had made her signal, although the track we followed reentered the fiumara at a point considerably beyond that. We brought all the baggage beasts along—went forward, in fact, as if just arriving on the scene after a long march, and I rode beside Grim giving him an exact description of the fiumara where the Avenger's brother waited.

Even so, it wasn't quite obvious what he intended to do, although he seemed in no doubt whatever. Narayan Singh's right fist kept shooting up in token that our would-be murderers were holding their course steadily. They were no doubt going slowly so as to make no noise, surprize being the main element of their strategy; so we went slowly too, in order to have them as far away from us as possible by the time we reached the tree.

As we held the shorter course and were mounted, we went at least two to their one, so that by the time we reached our goal they were about half-way to theirs, well out of call of the Avenger's brother, but not far enough along to discover our ruse and return or start hue and cry, which was about the ideal arrangement.

Grim ordered us to dismount fifty yards to the left of the blasted tree and hobble the camels. Then, leaving Ayisha in charge of Mujrim as a precaution against her giving the alarm too soon, he walked to the tree along with me and Ali Baba, and stood still and silent for nearly a minute, smiling as he watched the men who waited patiently below.

We were three to three; or so it must have seemed to the Avenger's brother when he looked up. He didn't seem surprized at first, for he expected Grim; and I daresay he thought Ayisha had stayed behind to direct the plunder of our bivouac, which would be about the normal behavior of a princess of that land. Nearly all tribal battles end in the plunder of one camp or the other by the women-folk, whose principal value to their husbands is their ability to garner wealth while the men gather martial laurels and notch their rifle-butts.

He rose and bowed to Grim, smiling handsomely—a regular Paladin making his guest free of all the desert.

"Greeting, Jimgrim! God give your honor long life! May the blessing of the Most High bring you peace and prosperity! My brother sent me to bid you welcome."

"Greeting!" Grim called down. And then, like the man who met Jehu son of Nimshi in the Bible story—"Is it peace?"

"Peace between us, Jimgrim! Come down here and rest a while."

"Three men," Grim answered, "and more than thirty camels? You speak of peace. Is this an ambush or a trap?"

"Allah do more to me, if I would lay a hand on you, Jimgrim! There is a party of miscreants near here, whom my men have gone to settle an account with. As soon as they have attended to that business we will start for Abu Kem, if your honor pleases."

The Avenger's brother was looking very hard indeed at Ali Baba, whose face was more than half hidden in the folds of his loose head-dress. He had only seen the old man once before, but seemed to think he recognized him nevertheless. Grim whispered to me without moving his lips much, and I stepped back a few paces to make a sign to our men.

"Perhaps you need help to deal with those miscreants?" Grim suggested. "One friend should help another, and where there are miscreants there is no peace. I pray you, let me lend a hand."

"Nay! Your honor's life is too important to be risked in such a little matter. Rather come down into the fiumara, and——"

The smile left the face of the Avenger's brother suddenly. But he acted well. He kept his chin high, and his gaze at Grim did not falter for a second. Our men, stepping forward all in line, had reached the fiumara's edge, and stood staring solemnly down at the three and the camels. Their rifles were cocked, but that is as normal in the desert as the old-time pirate custom of firing a shotted salute to another pirate ship.

There was no more than a hint yet, although a broad one, of reprisals in kind, but the Avenger's brother and his two men were nervous, and kept their hands off their own weapons with an obvious effort. They were absolutely at Grim's mercy, camels and all, but Grim offered no explanation, not even suggesting by a smile or gesture what the outcome was to be.

Grim is past master at that game of keeping silent until the other man commits himself; he plays his tune on the strings of

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human character, choosing carefully; for, as I have heard him say, there is always one string you can tune the others by. It was the Avenger's brother's turn to speak, and almost anything he might say—he being a chivalrous and honorable man according to his lights—was going to be a chord that Grim could use; and as a matter of fact he plucked the simplest string of all.

"Is it peace?" he asked, using Grim's formula.

"That is for you to say," Grim answered, looking rather stern, and wholly noncommittal. "It seems to me, I find you unprotected."

"True. I claim your protection, Jimgrim!"

Grim saluted him in the graceful, lordly desert fashion, head bent and hand to forehead.

"These are my men," he answered. "Their goods are my goods; their weapons my weapons; their honor my honor. Let it be their honor to protect both thee and me."

Ali Baba is a wise old fox, quicker than most professional thieves to understand fine points of honor, and totally different from the Western sharp, in that he will observe the fine point, once agreed on, to the death. He is no slick-tongued shyster, pinning down a victim to rules that he himself won't observe, although he is slick and slippery as well as an outrageous liar when it suits him.

He made an instant signal down the line and held up his right hand in token of agreement to the bargain; every one of his sons and grandsons—except Mujrim, who was still keeping Ayisha out of sight—followed suit. They swore aloud then in the name of Allah that the Avenger's brother's life was in their keeping; and at a sign from Grim, Mujrim, leading Ayisha by the hand, came forward and did the same thing.

"Jimgrim, thou art a prince of tricksters!" said Ali Baba, grinning sidewise at him with his old face screwed into a thousand wrinkles. "But have a care! One trick begets another!"

Under the unwritten desert law it would now be the unspeakable offense for either side to do the other an injury; but you can drive a coach and four horses between the provisions of any law that ever was made, unless there is means of enforcing it, and the greatest sticklers for law and etiquette are invariably splitters of fine hairs. It would have stretched imagination too far to pretend that we were absolutely safe now, but we were safer than we had been.

Ayisha was the weakest point remaining at the moment. She followed Grim down into the fiumara, and the black look flashed sidewise at her by the Avenger's brother was no good sign; reasonably and rightly he regarded her as the cause of his predicament, and if she had not purposely betrayed him there was no way of his knowing that, nor much likelihood of his believing it.

But Grim didn't propose to waste time over domestic squabbles just then. The men who had been sent to murder our crew were likely to draw blank any minute and come hurrying back, and although they would probably obey the Avenger's brother, if he should have time to forbid their attacking us, that wasn't much more than probable; they would see us between them and their camels—appraise the odds at three to two in their favor—and just as likely as not open fire on us from the cover of the jumbled fiumara rocks.

If they should return along the high ground, on the other hand, they might snap up Narayan Singh on the way and then pounce on our beasts with their valuable loads; and if there is one safe bet in the world it is this—that when plunder has once fallen into Arab hands it needs more than the orders of their Sheikh to make them give it up again.

SO GRIM sent one man running for Narayan Singh, and ordered all our camels brought down into the fiumara. They came tumbling down like a lot of double-ended dummies, some of the loaded ones falling and rolling, and all roaring their fear of the goat-path loud enough to set the fiumara echoing and warn whomever it might interest a mile away.

But you can't be discourteous to a man like the Avenger's brother—not, that is to say, if you are wise and have a bargain with him that is based on desert etiquette, and whatever his secret impatience Grim spoke as courteously as they say the Spanish torturers used to in the days when one gentleman would invite another to be seated on the iron chair before the glowing coals.

"If your honor would be kind enough to agree, I would like to take all my men and all your honor's camels about a mile farther up the fiumara."

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"In the name of the Prophet, why?"

"In order to wait there for your honor's men."

"But my men will expect to find me here!"

"*Inshallah*, we shall disappoint them. By your honor's favor we will leave one man here to explain the circumstances to them. Otherwise, if they should come on us suddenly in this place there might be an accident."

"*Mashallah!*" the Avenger's brother retorted hotly. "You doubt my good faith?"

"Allah forbid! But since our mutual honor is involved, my good faith obliges me to protect yours. Let there be no chance for misunderstanding between your men and mine."

The Avenger's brother did not like it, but couldn't refuse a command put so politely. He had the good taste to beg Grim's pardon for not having thought of the plan first, and they spent at least two minutes paying each other compliments, while Ali Baba fumed inwardly, but stood still with a magnificently assumed air of patience.

The old fox, too, had manners, and although technically the Avenger's brother was in no position to refuse any demand whatever, he waited for their owner's personal permission before laying hand on the camels or letting his sons take a step toward them.

So all the conventions were observed, and it was the Avenger's brother, not Grim, who at last requested Ali Baba to take all the men and beasts and to honor the universe by casting his noble shadow on it about a mile farther up the fiumara.

Ali Baba answered at once that the Avenger's brother's lightest wish was a command to him, second only in importance to the law of Allah; and, taking one thing with another, I don't believe two Western nations at daggers drawn could have saved each other's faces more gracefully.

One of the two men who had stayed with the Avenger's brother to welcome Grim was left behind to greet the returning men and take the sting out of their disappointment, and away the rest of us went to look for a better place in which to await them and, if necessary, defend ourselves against attack; for, having made no agreement with Grim or any one else, they might elect to solve the problem in their own way by rescuing their master.

As things turned out we never discovered what course they would have taken, for circumstances played into Grim's hands in such fashion that all the Avenger's brothers' men became our debtors within the hour—circumstances and Jmil Ras. And we were to learn more about Jmil Ras before the unexpected happened.

Not much was said as we trailed up the fiumara, Grim and Ali Baba side by side with the Avenger's brother bringing up the rear. But Ayisha ranged alongside me, and was by no means dumb.

"Now for thy magic, *Miyan!*" she commanded. "Thus far it has worked well and Jimgrim hasn't quarreled with me; in which he shows wisdom, for I am his friend. But that Achmet Saoud, the Avenger's brother, looked blackly at me. You must poison him. The son of sixty dogs suspected me of plotting with Ibrahim ben Ah, but could prove nothing. Now he will add that to this and make a mountain of it.

"He and the Avenger are not like ordinary brothers, for they do not hate each other, and what the one says the other agrees to; so there is trouble in store for me in Abu Kem unless you poison him. You say that magic stuff of yours will make the teeth fall out? Good. Do that for a beginning! I wish to see it work. Then, while he bewails his lost teeth, you may kill him altogether in some other way."

I think I have said at least a dozen times that I am no diplomatist, my forte being patience and direct action; but it seemed best to me just then to divide the honors with Narayan Singh, who, excepting those rather rare intervals when bazaar whisky stirs bats in his belfry, is a master of Machiavellian finesse.

"I must confess to you that there are two of us magicians. I can't work without consulting the Pathan," said I, "nor he without consulting me. And you've made it difficult for me to cast spells for you by mocking the Pathan when he makes love to you, so that he is angry and will agree to nothing."

Don't you think that was passing the buck pretty smartly on the spur of the moment? I mean, for a man who hasn't ever fooled himself that he was quick-witted. It convinced Ayisha by a process of inference not only that my magic powers were really so, but also that I should be treated more respectfully; for, where one magician might be dirked for disobedience, two, working in

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partnership, would have to be managed gingerly.

"But his love is foolish," she protested. "I wouldn't be the wife of such a man if there were no men left! He makes himself ridiculous and me a scandal!"

Then, with a subtle sidewise smile at me and a lift of her arched eyebrows—

"What a pity that the wrong magician vows he loves me!"

Well, there you are. You see, a man can't pit his brains successfully against a woman's, and you've got to use brute force, or run away, or else be defeated in the end. Grim is the only exception to that rule whom I have met, and I wouldn't bet on Grim too far, if a woman once got half a real chance at him.

If mine was a quick-fire diplomatic shot, hers was twice as quick and twenty times as cunning. Having no intention in the world of yielding herself to any Indian—a race she openly despised—she proposed to flirt with both of us and play one off against the other. You may say I could refuse; that I might have claimed the prerogative of a *darwaish*, who is supposed to have turned his back on the delights of this world, flirting the very first among them.

But unless I should walk to some extent into her net, I would be depriving Grim of half my usefulness. He was counting on me for inside information, which only Ayisha could provide. So the only practicable opening she had left me was a mighty mean one, and I tried that, *faute de mieux*.

"If that Pathan were to catch me looking at you covetously, he would knife me in the back at the first chance," I answered lamely.

She laughed delightedly at that. Nothing could have pleased her more than the notion of two magicians fighting to possess her, with the ultimate refusal hers in any case.

"I have seen you fight," she answered. "You fought Mujrim, who is twice as strong as the Pathan; and I know your magic can protect you for, you remember, I stuck my dagger into you and it only grazed your leg."

"That Pathan has killed a score of men in Palestine," I answered, "and Allah knows how many more before he came here."

"Twenty men to his hand? Good. Kill him then, and cut one-and-twenty notches on your rifle-butt!"

"I have to consider Jimgrim, who employs us both," I answered, "and Jimgrim is considering Jmil Ras. Tell me about Jmil Ras. He is called a very great magician. If that is true, I mustn't kill the Pathan, because it will take the two of us to overcome him. Tell me all you know about him."

"Nobody knows anything about him, except that he is handsome and in league with the ——! Some say this, and some say that. He can make the dead men talk in their graves."

"How do you know that?"

"Because he said there was gold in the mountain and began to dig for it. But there were graves of saints there, and the people said he should not desecrate the sacred ground. So he cast a spell, and each of the saints began to talk out of his tomb, commanding him to dig the gold out in order that they might have peace.

"The saints said that if the gold were once taken the devils would go away forever, having nothing left to stay there for. A hundred men who were present heard them say it, and the voice of each saint was different from the other, some speaking faintly, as if from far off, and others very loud, as if close at hand; but they all said the same thing, although some of them used different words."

"That sounds like strong magic," said I. "What else does he do?"

"Sometimes men begin to doubt him, because the *mallims*, who did not hear the saints speak, come and say that it is sacrilege to dig wherever saints' tombs are. Then he does unbelievable things, turning bullets into money, gathering gold pieces from the air, discovering this and that thing in the clothing of men who never saw the things before. Moreover, he can make a camel talk; when it opens its mouth words like a man's come forth, so that nowadays folk have a saying that you should ask the camel of Jmil Ras."

"Who was his father?" I demanded, thinking that might lead to revelations.

"The father of insolence and cunning and all unexpectedness!" she answered. "None can foretell his next move or explain his last one; yet he foretells everything. Whenever men gather to attack him, he seems aware of it and makes the first attack, sometimes by night, dispersing the first-comers before they are reenforced, so that now men are unwilling to gather against him, saying that

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none can fight against the powers of darkness."

We reached a bend in the fiumara where it would be possible for twenty men to render a good account of themselves against thirty, and I had just finished repeating that conversation word for word to Grim when a lot of intermittent, ragged firing broke out somewhere about a mile behind us in the direction from which we had come. Rifles always seem to me to have voices that express emotions in their own field as distinctly as those of men and animals; it's one of those things you can't explain, that nevertheless convince you after years of more or less promiscuous campaigning.

You can't persuade me that the sound made, for instance, by a lost man firing to attract attention to himself is the same as that made by a hunter shooting game, and I am not alone in my conviction. Grim, for one, agrees with me, and so do most desert Arabs I have talked with.

That was desperate firing, done by men fighting for their lives, alternately taking careful aim and then blazing away furiously in a moment's panic. Grim got out his glasses, and leaving the camels in the fiumara the whole lot of us followed him to the top of a sandy hillock that provided a good view of the countryside for miles.

We could all see what was happening, but Grim with the glasses was the only one who could make out details. The Avenger's brother's men—invisible among the stones in the bed of the fiumara—were being attacked by more than a hundred, who had arrived unseen from the eastward—for their camels were hobbled in a group on the east bank—and were now firing into the fiumara from both sides. It looked like a merciless effort at extermination; but having had experience of those jumbled boulders I was willing to bet that it couldn't succeed unless the men on top were willing to go down and finish the business hand to hand.

Ali Baba was the first to speak, and he was all for flight, as usual. That was the fox instinct.

"*Wallah!* Jimgrim, why wait! This whole business is a trap to get those goods of mine! Those are the Avenger's men attacking, and they think it is we who are down in the fiumara! This Avenger's brother is a treacherous fellow sent to block this end of the trap while the others attacked from the rear. Trust me! I see through the whole plot! Now be wise, Jimgrim! Listen to an old man, who has come alive, thanks to Allah, out of a thousand tight places! Jmil Ras is the man to depend on; ride as the wind goes, then, for Jmil Ras!"

"What does Jmil Ras look like?" Grim asked casually.

"In the name of Allah! Who cares what he looks like?"

"Black mustache? No beard or whiskers? Does he wear a cock's plume stuck in his head-dress?"

"Yes!" said Ayisha. "He makes magic with it!"

Grim returned the glasses to their case, and smiled at me.

"We've found your friend Jeremy," he said. "D'you think he'd recognize you?"

"Not in this disguise, I'll bet he wouldn't."

"Can you think of any way of making him recognize you? He's out for trouble by the look of things, and there'll be a mess if he divides his force and sends fifty or so to tackle us while he deals with that bunch in the fiumara. Think now!"

I'm not pretending to explain how thoughts come in a crisis. I only know that if they didn't there'd be precious few of us alive to carry on this world's affairs.

"Yes," I said, "if I can get within a hundred yards of him, and if that's Jeremy, I can call the fighting off and we'll issue rain checks."

"Good!" he answered. "Go and try."

I tell you, I like that fellow Grim. He knows how to pick a man for a certain task, and then turn him loose without both ears chock-full of limiting instructions. He turned and drove our party back under cover without another word to me.

CHAPTER X

"You're a fallen angel, Ramsden!"

I TOOK my rifle, not that I proposed to use it, but for old acquaintance sake. because all my stalking has been after big game and, say what you like, we humans are creatures of habit just as much as the animals we hunt. I once knew a man who couldn't find his way in the city without an umbrella, and I was one of the very few who never laughed at him.

It wasn't easy stalking. For one thing, I had to go fast unless those men among the boulders were to be decimated; for another, it was practically open country, with only

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that sandy ridge running nearly parallel to the fiumara to take advantage of. But, as probably a million men discovered in the great war, you can hide behind a pebble when the other fellow isn't looking for you and inside a few square feet of shadow even when he is. A brown Bedouin cloak is hot and in your way when you're using hands and knees, but even in strong sunlight shades away into the desert color-scheme beyond belief.

It was nervous work, though, for I knew that two score eyes and a pair of Zeiss binoculars were watching me from under cover in the rear, and there wasn't one of them likely to miss a fine point. True, I wasn't going to get written up in the papers, and read an account next day of how badly I had bungled the fourth hole; and Grim wasn't going to pass remarks whatever happened; but I function best out of the public eye, and would never have made a good gladiator or anything like that, although I enjoy using what faculties I have so thoroughly that old women of both sexes have called me an instinctive savage.

I think I made the distance—say a mile along the straight from where Grim watched to the boulder I had singled out to work magic from—in a minute or two under half an hour, and I daresay each five minutes of that time cost the life of a man, although I've lost no sleep over it. I didn't start the fight, and I didn't hesitate to save time by taking chances across the open when a circuit would have cost ten more minutes.

Anyhow, unseen as far as I know, I reached the cover of a boulder shaped something like a dog's head, rather more than a hundred yards to the rear of the firing-line, and wondered what to do next, for there was so much din of battle going on—shooting and yelling and running to and fro for a better pot-shot at somebody among the stones below—that you couldn't have made yourself heard at that distance with a foghorn.

Every minute or so somebody would yell, and jump up, and dance delightedly, swearing he had shot a man, grabbing his mates here and there to brag to them and explain in pantomime exactly where the bullet hit, and how the victim fell over; but fortunately you can't always believe an Arab's account of casualties any more than what you read at home in the daily paper. But I saw three men drilled cleanly through the head as they leaned over the edge of the fiumara, so it wasn't any child's play that was going on, and the men in the trap weren't selling their lives cheap.

I could see the man who Grim had said was Jmil Ras, but it was several minutes before he turned enough toward me for me to make sure he was really Jeremy. He had a black cock's feather stuck in the camel's-hair band that bound his Arab head-dress, and that was unusual enough to mark him for no ordinary native of the country; but it might have meant that he had shot an Australian in the war and chose that way of boasting of the feat. Some men's rifle-butts have so many notches cut in them that they invent new ways of signifying that their foes are dead.

But when he turned my way there wasn't a doubt of him. He had lost a little of his youthful look, but he was Jeremy Ross if twelve o'clock is noon.

He wasn't encouraging his men or giving any orders, but gave the impression of letting them have their fling. I saw him laugh aloud when one of his own fire-breathing fanatics was shot dead in the act of boasting, but on the other hand he dragged the wounded from the firing-line with his own hands and stowed them under cover behind rocks.

In fact, it was the strangest picnic, and he the strangest host I had ever watched, and how to call his attention without drawing the fire of twenty rifles on myself seemed an unsolvable mystery.

But I was there to make magic, and seeing I had to take a chance of some sort I decided that if my nerves weren't quite as steady, perhaps, as Jeremy's at the moment, my life was at least as sweet as his; and if his nerves were really the steadier, then a close shave wouldn't hurt him. He sat down on a rock and began unscrewing the stopper of a service flask, and I know I hoped the rock he sat on was as hot as the infernal thing I had to sprawl across. It is rarely that two men shoot their best in exactly the same position; I like to rest my belly and elbow over a solid support of some kind.

The risk was that I might drill a bullet through his head when he lifted the flask to drink, but that seemed better than being shot before I could get word with him; so I held my breath and took aim six inches to

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the left of his mouth, and let drive as he lifted the thing across the foresight.

If I weren't a good shot I should be one of the unteachables who belong in the orderly places where you buy your meat in shops and don't cross the street until the cop gives you permission; for Lord knows I have had experience enough.

And as luck would have it, Jeremy held the flask by the neck, so that there was a good hand's breadth of brown felt cover between my eye and the sky-line; the bullet went plump through the middle of that, sploshing the water into his face, knocking the flask galley-west, and spoiling his drink abominably, but doing no other damage.

And of course he glanced in my direction, although I never heard tell what human sense it is that tells a man which way a bullet came. I'm willing to swear he couldn't have heard the report of my rifle, because of the din made by his own rapscallions. I could see his lips move as he swore, but it wouldn't have been Jeremy if he hadn't laughed at the same time; and he wouldn't have been human if he hadn't reached for his rifle, but before he could touch it I gave tongue.

"Coo-eee-eee!"

Lord! How he jumped and stared; and the look of delight that flashed across his face was worth twice that dusty crawl to come and see. He couldn't have heard that long Australian yell for more than two years, and it took all the sudden fight out of him. He let the rifle lie, and stood up—a fair mark for any one inclined to murder him—and putting both hands to his mouth yelled back:

"Coo-eee-eee! Coo-eee-eee!"

Now that was genuine magic. There was no hocuspocus, superstition or mechanical ingenuity in any way connected with it. I had made a sound that touched the inner heart-strings of a fellow man and switched his whole attention instantly from the absorbing business of a fight to me—alone—a bearded, brown, presumptive Indian on a hot rock. He turned his back entirely on the screaming fighting men, coo-ee-ed again between his hands, and came running toward me with the awkward half-galloping gait of a horseman in a hurry.

You may say what you like about Free Masonry, and I say nothing, being wise in that respect. But when you're in a tight place in foreign parts and yearn for action without argument, just yell "Coo-eee" to a Cornstalk; and if all —— and its accomplices are boiling between him and you, you'll see —— shifted and its legions made afraid, because there isn't any inferno, and never was, that can douse an Australian's chivalry.

It's a new chivalry, because theirs is a new land; but there's more of the old in it than you dare try to explain to an Australian, unless you want to swap punches. They don't like being told that England with long-bow and leather jacket taught them anything. The point to bear in mind is, that in a tight place, in any circumstances, "Coo-eee" works. And now that I've spilled the beans, I'll leave Australians to sweep them up again, and get on with the story.

I guess he thought I was an Indian until he came within ten yards of me, and Australians all draw the color-line tight and hard, don't forget that. But I once saw an Australian sluice himself from head to foot and go through burning grass to rescue an Afghan, simply because the Afghan had once driven camels across the desert in West Aus.

When he came close enough I grinned, and called out:

"Hello Jeremy! Who'd have thought of meeting you again? What's your difficulty this time?"

"Oh, you, is it?" he answered. "Well, I'll be ——! Where did you get those whiskers? Say; that fellow Grim turned out a dandy—perfect Jim-pippin of a man! What became of him?"

We shook hands as if we were pumping water, and he sat down there on the rock beside me, with all that fighting going on, and began to talk as if we had seen each other yesterday.

"Hah-hah! Too bad I couldn't kidnap Grim along with me. He and I'd have added Arabia to the Commonwealth! Hah! What happened to him? I heard tales of him using this part for a checker-board, shoving the Sheikhs from square to square as he pleased."

"He's close by," I said. "He sent me to tell you to call this fighting off."

"The —— he did! Same old Grim, eh? He'd hand out orders to the Almighty and watch him do it! But listen a minute: I came out to meet a man named Ali Baba, who's supposed to be bringing me dynamite and jam. I'd walk to Jericho to get some

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jam. These parts aren't healthy for a billy-and-bluey column on the march, so I got the idea to round 'em up and kind o' nurse 'em, see? Came out with a hundred men—best gang of Bible-minded robbers ever you set eyes on—and sent out a scouting party of twenty at dawn to look for my supply column.

"They looked about and didn't see much, so they cooked it up between 'em to rest in this fiumara, where I couldn't see 'em loafing from the skyline, knowing I'd twist their tails to beat the Queen if I caught 'em at it. And while they parked their hams down there along come thirty sons-of-guns and go for 'em without notice! Shot nine men before you could say Christmas, and waded in to chew hash out of the rest!

"I know who the —— are; they belong to that Willy-boy who calls himself the Avenger, and he's got it in for me. I haven't treated him strict enough—too soft-hearted by a darned sight—been teaching him kindergarten—stripped his men and sent 'em back to him naked and that kind of thing, whereas what he needs is strafing by a Hun.

"Top o' that my men were sore all the way through at being jumped on that way, and I don't blame 'em. They swore by Allah and the Prophet to wipe that outfit off the map, and I turned 'em loose to do it. Call 'em off, eh? Might as well try to whistle dingoes off a sick sheep! They mean to clean up, bones and all."

"They have my sympathy," said I, "but it don't suit Grim's book, Jeremy old man. He puts it this way—he'd regard it as a special favor if you'd call this game off, because he's got a hotter one waiting to begin, and all this noise you're making spoils his aim."

"Does he know I'm here?"

"You bet."

"And he asks it as a favor?"

"Certainly."

"Well I'll be ——! If Grim's not a good sport, there isn't one! Don't he think I'm a deserter?"

"He didn't say."

"Well, he's the boy for me! Let's see if we can't oblige him. Stay there."

He ran off, skipping and jumping, toward the firing-line without another word and, seeming to pick them carefully, dragged back two men by the scruff of the neck and shook them until they paid attention to him.

I suppose I ought to have stayed where I was, because there isn't any sense in walking about among flying bullets unless you have to, and Grim was counting on me for information and support later on. But women aren't the only people who are curious, and anyhow I went.

The only men down in the fiumara who were visible had been dead some while, and it was doubtful whether you could bury them without a rake, because Jeremy's crowd on both banks were wasting ammunition riddling the corpses full of holes. And I suppose each man would notch his rifle after each shot! But those who were still keeping up a hot fire from under cover must have been getting short of ammunition, and it didn't call for much shrewdness to figure out that they would surrender if given the chance.

I don't know what Jeremy said to the two men he had singled out. Maybe he threatened them with black magic or something of that sort, but whatever it was it took effect. He sent one man to cross the fiumara below the bend and spread the order from mouth to mouth on the far side, and after about ten minutes the firing ceased. Then Jeremy himself stood as close to the edge of the fiumara as he dared and offered quarter in the name of Allah, saying that any one who cared to claim protection now might have it.

There were only eleven men left alive, and several of those were seriously wounded, but they had enough presence of mind left not to show themselves as long as Jeremy's men were in evidence.

When he called his men off, and one spirit more daring than the rest had crawled out to take a look, the remainder emerged one by one like rabbits out of holes, whereat Jeremy told them to bury their dead and look sharp about it.

That reassured them, especially when a couple of rough hoes were tossed down for the purpose, it being a Moslem's principal obsession to be buried when he dies, just as a Hindu wants to have his body burned. But the job was perfunctory; they buried the totally dead ones first under about a foot of sand, with a few stones piled on top to make the hyenas work for a meal—and then dug rather deeper graves for the men who should have been dead, even if they weren't, and would be soon in any case.

They weren't allowed to carry out that

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part of the plan, but it was an interesting sidelight on men and manners. They had one shallow grave dug, and placed a wounded man in it before Jeremy called my attention to it, placing the man so as to sit upright with his back against the end, and the victim seemed to take it all as a matter of course.

He would probably have died of thirst, if the vultures and hyenas didn't hasten the process; and in spite of that prospect he seemed surprized, and even resentful, when Jeremy ordered him carried up and laid in the shadow of a rock beside his own wounded.

He was bad-tempered, too, about the water that was given him to drink, swearing it wasn't fit for camels; and he cursed like a wet cat at one of Jeremy's men who was told off to bandage him. The other wounded were the same—indifferent to the prospect of a thirsty death in an open grave, and bitterly resentful of attention.

There wasn't much you could do for the wounded anyhow, and I wouldn't have cared to change places with them. They were slung on to the camels—one man nearly upside-down in a gunny-bag until Jeremy interfered—and taken along on the off-chance of their having enough stamina to survive the march; in which case they would be held for ransom, or else traded against prisoners held by the surrounding Sheikhs.

One way and another it was nearly an hour after the surrender before Jeremy provided me a camel and I started off beside him at the head of all his men to resume touch with Grim. The march, though, didn't seem to last five minutes, for Jeremy was garrulous, chatting away to me in English just as if I weren't pretending to be an Indian and disregarding my protests with a fine air.

"Make any explanation you want to afterward. I'll back it up, and they'll believe me, for I'm a great magician in these parts, mind you, and anything I tell 'em that isn't in the Book gets written into the appendix quick! Say, I haven't talked English for a century, it seems like, and I'm going to do it now or bust. You listen, and tell me if I've lost the knack!"

YOU might as well have tried to stop the tide with a tin bucket. He talked away like a boy just home from school, and made you laugh because of the incongruity of all that flow of speech from a man dressed like an Arab, mounted on a camel in the midst of all that silent desert. The black cock's feather stuck into his brow-band was the only thing in keeping with his conversation.

"Yes," he said, "I've stuck to the old sky-tickler. Had to have something to remind me I was white. But say; as I was telling you, that fellow Grim's a two-legged man on feet. He has my vote. I fell foul in Akaba of one of those red-throated fools with inky fingers that the army calls staff-officers, and he was for having me treated with field-punishment number one plus. But Grim's white, and thinks without moving his lips. He said nothing, but slipped me away with a column of camp-roustabouts who left that afternoon with odds and ends of supplies; but I'll get that red-throat some day!"

"No you won't, he's dead. Died the same night."

"You don't say! Well, that's too bad. I was for getting my discharge in proper shape and going round the world to bust him in the nose. He called a beef-bullock an ox, and said I couldn't talk King's English. Well, he's in —— now, and let him roast! He'll know what beef is when the fat runs! As I was saying, I slipped away with a column of fly-by-nights, thanks be to Grim, and they and I were fast friends in half o' no time. I did tricks for 'em, and they had me down for a number one wizard who should bring them luck.

"They'd made up their minds to cut and run with the swag before ever we started, and instead of slitting my throat they made me prisoner and had me giving a performance at every tin-pot village we spent a day at. We traveled nights, you know, and only looked in at the one-horse stands, where they hadn't enough fighting men to hold us up."

"How far did they take you?" I asked him.

"My ——! We went forever! And I got so sick of finding money in a pocket-handkerchief and turning bullets into eggs that I began to invent new tricks, and got good at 'em too. Ventriloquism went over best, and I got to making he goats say their prayers and prophesy rain; and one day rain came after I'd done that, so they sacrificed the goat on a rock to Allah and made me a saint of El-Islam or some such tommyrot. But they wouldn't let me go. A Johnny-on-the-spot who can make goats tell when

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rain 'll come looked good to them, and they offered me a quarter-dozen wives, but no return ticket."

Being circumstantial godfather to Jeremy, I had my rights. I asked the obvious question.

"No. I'm a bachelor right down to this minute. They lined up a lot of 'em and offered me my pick, and some were not half bad. But I've kissed a few of the other kind, and I'm no King Solomon. The Queen of Sheba couldn't corral me! Crikey! Wait till I set foot in South Aus! One look round at the Bull's Kid, and then the wallaby trail, with soft grass under me!

"I'll take a tin billy and an old blue blanket for the love of it; and I know places where the little stations line out one by one along the road, and real girls in lilac and white sunbonnets and straw hats lean over the hitching rail at dinner-time to see if strangers are in sight who'd say yes to a meal. Oh, bully boy! Real women, with violet and blue and gray eyes, and red lips, and a jolly laugh! Say; you ought to come with me. I'll show you lips worth kissing if you'll take those whiskers off!"

"Thought you had a gold-mine?" said I.

"So I have. But how did you know?"

"Grim told me. Go on talking."

"Well, I got sick of it and hit the trail southward—stole a good camel and lit out one night with nothing to guide me but the stars and a habit of being lucky. North would have been best, but seeing I couldn't make that the south had to do instead; and the farther I went south the easier it was to beat my way by doing tricks. I got all the way to Yemen, and if a crow flew backward to keep the sun out of his eyes, he'd make a thousand miles of that trip even so."

"Weren't you sick by that time?"

"Uh-huh. Boils. Too many dates and muck like that. I needed a refit sure enough, but all I got wind of down in Yemen was another of these here staff-officers acting like —— in a small way near the coast, and if I'd gone to him he'd have had me pinched for a deserter sure—which I wasn't, but I couldn't have proved it.

"Top o' that I'd picked up information on the way down—white quartz, old son, with nice soft yellow veins in it that you could pick out with the blade of your knife; so I tossed up whether I'd hunt the home of that stuff or give that staff-officer a chance to call me names, and punch his head for it and go to jail. I used an old two-headed penny that I keep for doing tricks with, and tossed three times to make sure. Then I hit the trail again—north this time."

"Sick and all?"

"Why, no. I got feeling better soon as that penny made my mind up; and then I ran into an Indian doctor who'd gone broke in Mecca and was working his way home. That lad did me no end o' good. He could make good strong physic out of weeds—stuff that 'ud shift the inside out of a tombstone; and another thing that recommended him to me was a half-pound of mercury he carried in a little iron box. He traded it against a dozen lessons in sleight o' hand, but I gave him at least two dozen, for he was clumsy—no surgeon—just a pill-and-poultice walloper. He could palm six coins at once and fool his own eye when I was through with him. That mercury looked good to me, and I wanted the *miyan* to have his money's worth."

"Did you hike back all alone?" I asked him.

"No. Didn't hike, and couldn't have bought solitude with real money. There were fanatics in Yemen unattached—sore as boils against every Sheikh in sight, and wanted for minor crimes like murder and rape. They took a fancy to the tricks I did and approved of my reputation for saintliness; and seeing they were first-class foragers, and wouldn't let me out of sight night or day, I took 'em along after they'd fossicked a fine new camel for me that belonged to the wife of an enemy of theirs. This is the beast I'm riding now; pippin, ain't it?"

"How many were they?" I asked him.

"Eighteen to begin with. But we went up Arabia like a magnet through a sand-heap, picking up the iron in it on our way. And I laid law down. Bet your life I did! Any fanatic who hesitated to obey me got stripped stark naked on the spot and turned loose without weapons to rustle an honest living.

"Top o' that I worked the oracle, of course, all ways from the middle, spending all my spare time figuring on certs; and when the certs I'd prophesied came off they wanted to start a new sect or something, and have me archbishop. Time I reached this part of Arabia there wasn't much I couldn't do in the way of getting things.

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"Natural-born —— who didn't know what truth meant were afraid to lie to me, for fear I'd find 'em out and turn their livers into hot lead. I didn't have to ask more than thirty thousand times before they led me to the outcrop—leastways, to where the outcrop had been. Solomon or somebody about a million years ago when labor didn't cost much had shaved the surface clean, and there were tombs on top of it."

"I'll bet you didn't admit what you were looking for," said I. "You'd never have found it in a million years."

"No. I wasn't as raw as all that. I showed 'em a piece of quartz I'd won from a *m'allim*, who admitted it came out of a tomb; and I told 'em I was looking for a stone that would be holier than the black one in the wall of the Ka'abah at Mecca. I said that chunk I carried was a piece of it, and the fools 'ud come and ask to kiss the handkerchief I had it wrapped in. Well; I used to get so sick of asking questions that now and then I'd almost decide to head for Jerusalem and let 'em call me a deserter; but that was when I'd run out of the Indian's physic and my liver wasn't working good.

"I made some more physic by-and-by out of weeds I found, and took a chance on it; tried it on a sick Arab, and he got well, so I drank about a quart—it was awful bitter—and it fixed me to beat clock-work. Never had a sick minute after that.

"Say; after I've made this gold-mine pay I'm going to form a company and float that physic on the market—thought of a name for it too—name and a slogan—Jeremy's Taib,* tickles your liver and makes it laugh! Pretty good, what? Make a million out o' that easy."

"Tell me some more about the mine," said I.

"Oh, the mine? That's simple. There were graves on top of it, and they told me only one man had been down into 'em for centuries. That 'ud be the *m'allim* I won the piece of quartz from. So I did a bit of prophesying, and voted myself chairman of an investigating committee of one, to go down with a torch and tell the dead men what was going on in the world.

"We had a corroboree on top first, and they all did two-bow prayers, and I hadn't been down in the first tomb fifteen minutes before I struck it rich. Say; those old-time emperors knew how to make the hands turn to all right! D'you know what they did? You'd never guess. They took out the whole reef in chunks and shipped it—must have done! There isn't a sign of a furnace, or a mill, or a dump. They took no chances on the local manager, but toted every bit of rock on men's heads to the coast and roasted it elsewhere. There's no other way of explaining it. And why they quit beats guessing. Maybe there was revolution. There would have been, if I'd been one of the labor gang!

"They quit with the reef cut square across and the prettiest veins you ever saw—loaded, man, loaded! Running downward nearly due east at an angle of fifteen. I let on that the dead men down there wanted all the quartz removed because the holy stone I was after was somewhere underneath, and the only difficulty after that was tools and dynamite. You haven't got dynamite by any chance?"

"Grim knows where there's some hidden away. I've a drum of cyanide."

"I guess those whiskers of yours are singed feathers. You're a fallen angel, Ramsden! Who's that lordly-looking codger on a camel over there?"

"It's Grim," said I. "Seems he's coming out alone to meet us."

"The —— it is? That Arab Grim? Say; give me one o' your cigarets quick! I'm feeling nervous!"

And he was, too. His hand was trembling as he struck the match.

CHAPTER XI

*"Allaho Akbar!"**

COME to think of it, that meeting between Grim and Jeremy was rather dramatic. I rode my camel to one side and looked on, keeping near enough to listen, but aloof enough to take in the whole scene—Jeremy's hundred in a long line two abreast, with the rear ranks closing up toward us like a telescope and all their spears and rifles pointing this and that way—Jeremy along in front, smiling with a strange twitch at the corner of his mouth—Grim facing him, sitting his camel square and upright, uncompromising as the Sphinx, and the sun beating down on the lot of us so hard that the dust devils, whirling in the simoom, shone with a glint of gold. The

*All right.

*God is Great!

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fiumara on our right hand, cutting the dry desert like a great wound down the middle. A horizon bounded by blue, hot hills. And Grim spoke first.

"Well, Jeremy, how's everything?"

"Oh, pretty good."

"Got a gold-mine, I hear."

"Sure. Want to buy a share?"

"Did you get the news of peace?"

Jeremy nodded and sat sidewise, swinging a leg across his camel.

"There's no amnesty yet for deserters," Grim said dryly.

"That don't faze me. See here, Grim; I'm no deserter, and you know it!"

The old pugnacious look was dawning dark on Jeremy's face, but Grim paid no attention to it. He was going to lead his ace of trumps in half a minute, but you couldn't expect Jeremy to know that; it takes time to learn Grim's game.

"Got your discharge about you?" Grim inquired, as if he expected Jeremy to pull it out and flourish it.

"Say; you're talking like one of those staff-experts! What's come over you? Of course I haven't my discharge! How could I have?"

"Then you're still a trooper."

"Well? What of it?"

"Trooper Jeremy Ross of the Australian Light Horse, transferred on special service to Akaba."

"All right. Spell it backwards, if you want to! What's the game?"

"I'm Major James Grim, your commanding officer."

"Well?"

"If you're no deserter, you'll need proof of it. A court martial would summon me as witness. Being the first officer to get in contact with you, my evidence would be important."

"I don't get you yet."

Grim smiled broadly at last.

"Thought you were quicker-witted, Jeremy. What should the first act of a——"

"Oh, ha-ha! I get you. I report for duty, sir. Was made prisoner and kidnaped by deserting Arabs. Managed to escape, but haven't set foot yet on British territory."

"All right. You're ready to obey orders?"

"Um-m-m! Got a copy of the articles of war about you? I'd like to read 'em first. Is this a scheme to order me off to Jerusalem and jump my mine?"

"It's a scheme to save both of us trouble," Grim answered. "I'm going to give you an order. If you obey it, well and good; if not, you'll have to clear yourself as best you can without my help."

"Well; you were a white man when I knew you last. I'll take a chance. Go on then, sir. I report for duty."

"Are those your men?" Grim asked him.

"That's what they say."

"Make me and my party prisoners!"

Jeremy threw his leg back again and began to whistle.

"I'm not joking," Grim assured him. "I'm an officer on the strength of the British Army giving you official orders."

"Oh, all right!" said Jeremy. "Want to be crucified, or anything like that? We've all the extras."

"Suppose you get busy?" Grim suggested.

"Very good, sir. Major Grim, you're my prisoner! So are you, Ramsden! How many in your party, sir?"

"Twenty-three at present, including the Avenger's fourth wife, the Avenger's brother, a Sikh, and a party carrying supplies intended for you."

Jeremy whistled again and began to chuckle.

"Better hand your weapons over, I suppose. And how about cigarets? If you've a packet of canteen gaspers in your kit I'll reduce your ransom!"

We each handed him a broken packet, and he almost lighted two cigarets at once, he was so glad to get them.

"Mind you, I'm not running a hotel," he warned us. "There's better damper and dead sheep to be had in the Never-never country of West Aus; but if you've really got Ali Baba and my loads along, I'll feed you jam till further orders. Jam makes the grandfather goat slip down your gullet easier. And say, how about orders now? Who's giving 'em, I mean? Will you obey me?"

"My whole party surrenders to you and claims your protection," Grim answered. "We'll observe the conventions."

"Conventions, eh? You'll find me a stickler for those things! Dress for dinner you know, and no tooth-picks at the table—use both forefingers and a thumb to pull the gristle out of your back teeth. I think you'd better keep your weapons after all, because about the only convention we really observe is going tooth and nail for any armed party that crosses our landscape.

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"There's sure to be a hot scrap between here and home, because the Willy-boy Avenger has it in for me; we've used up between us all the threats there are, like two dogs on chain. Something's due to give now, and you'll see the hair fly in mouthfuls! But, say; tell me the idea! What's the drift of my taking you prisoners?"

"Go to it first," said Grim. "I'll explain later on. I'm on the way to the Avenger's camp. First his wife and then his brother met me on the way. They tried to kill my escort, who happened to be Ali Baba's crew with your loads. You take the lot of us prisoners, and carry us off to your place. Isn't that clear?"

"Clear as bull-pen soup. All right. But who's the wife? Not Ayisha?"

"Yes, Ayisha."

"Golly, what a lark! She's been trying to marry me for weeks past. Come on, you prisoners, we're wasting time—lead me to the big feast! Oh, say, will the rest of you show fight?"

"No," said Grim, "I've warned them. They'll surrender."

"How about the Avenger's brother? He's a peppery customer from all accounts."

"Ali Baba will attend to him. Come on."

BUT it turned out that Ali Baba had his hands full. The Avenger's brother never doubted that Jmil Ras had made the lot of us prisoners. In fact, knowing what his own men had been up to, and guessing without much difficulty how they had crept into the wrong wasps' nest, he was surprized that we weren't all slated for execution—but not agreeably surprized. There are lots of his kind. He wasn't a bit afraid of death, but he hated to surrender to a man whom he regarded as a rival of his brother for the overlordship of the district, and Grim's back hadn't been turned a minute before he was making Ali Baba all kinds of promises—heaven included—if the old man and his sons would desert Grim and make a bolt for it.

"But I said," said Ali Baba afterward, "by the tomb of the Prophet, said I, Jimgrim I know, and this world I have found good; by the grace of Allah I will stay in it and follow Jimgrim while I may. I die when Allah pleases, but not at the behest of a prince who sought to murder me an hour ago! And I said to my sons, said I, I am old, and it may be ye would like Mujrim for your leader now; therefore choose whether ye will follow me or this Avenger's brother, for my lot is cast with Jimgrim's and I wait here for him.

"So they came on the Avenger's brother from behind, and threw him on the ground, and tied him hand and foot; and Ayisha mocked him as he lay, until I bade the woman hold her peace."

The old man wanted to deliver all the goods to Jmil Ras there and then. Having no notion of Grim's ultimate purpose, any more than the rest of us had, he asked for a final settlement of accounts and leave to return home; and being a moderate old gentleman according to his lights, he only demanded a hundred camels for the mercury. But though Jeremy and Jmil Ras were one and the same man, their methods were as different as chalk from cheese—almost as those of Jekyll from the ways of Hyde.

"Did I not pay you?" asked Jmil Ras. "*Wallah!* You shall keep your bargain to the last letter of the last word in it! Your son Mujrim boasted to me that you dared follow any trail and fight whoever opposed you. Make good the boast, thou gray-beard! You shall fight your way to Abu Kem I promise you! Is it nothing that I meet you with a hundred men to help you keep faith with me?"

"*Il hamdul'illah!*" the old fox answered humbly, and added almost under his breath with no humility at all, "curse you and your fighting! With me and my sons to help him, Jimgrim would have managed this without a fight at all!"

But I suspect that even he doubted the truth of that assertion within the hour. I don't know what plan Grim had had in mind before Jeremy arrived on the scene, although I don't doubt he had one roughly formed that could be changed, as usual, at a moment's notice to offset the moves of any adversary.

But it is as certain as humanly can be that we should all have been in the Avenger's hands that morning if Jeremy hadn't turned up; and how Grim would have saved those goods from confiscation—which, after all, didn't matter so much—and Ali Baba and his sons from death as traders with the Avenger's enemy—which did matter a great deal—beats imagination.

I've confidence enough in Grim to believe that he would have found some way out of

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the predicament, but I can't believe he would have settled the affair without a fight to the death between the forces of Jeremy and the Avenger.

As I have said before, the only rule that you can lay down concerning Arab warfare is that the water-holes are the all-important strategic, and whoever holds those can make the enemy come to him. Barring that, the strategy and tactics are haphazard, governed by a moment's whim and utterly confusing for that reason, so that the best-laid schemes unless put through with overwhelming force, are really more likely to fail against the Arab than some adaptation of his own rough-scrambled methods would be.

The Avenger had sent out his brother and thirty men to meet Grim, get those goods intended for Jmil Ras, and punish with death the men who had dared to trade with his mortal enemy. There wasn't any imaginable reason why he shouldn't have sent more than thirty men to accomplish that purpose; and if he had learned since that Jmil Ras was on the prowl with a hundred, there seemed even less reason why he should now send fifty more to reenforce his brother.

If he had sent two hundred, as he could have done, and had taken the field in person, he might have had a chance to catch Jmil Ras away from home and overwhelm him. An even sounder policy would have been to swoop with all his forces on the stronghold of Jmil Ras and take it by storm in the owner's absence.

But one bet at least seems safe—that most Arab chiefs will become hypnotized by the thought of possible plunder moving on the hoof. I suppose it seemed better business to the Avenger to make sure of possessing the goods intended for Jmil Ras, and the redoubtable Grim along with them, than to take his chance in a pitched battle.

And he may have been right, for all I know, because Jmil Ras, even with his back turned, was no easy mark for any man. Friend Jeremy had made his reputation good a score of times by out-generaling every leader sent against him.

Whatever the Avenger's argument, he sent out fifty belated men to reenforce his brother, and they came down the bed of the fiumara two by two with all the serene confidence of men who expect to find the work already done. All the precaution they took was to throw out an advance-guard of four men, and Jeremy's lookout reported them before they came within two miles of us.

So we set an ambush in a hurry, which only worked sufficiently to draw the fifty within range—for the kites circling overhead betrayed us—and there was a first-class scrap that lasted nearly an hour and was better than anything that Colonel Cody ever staged.

You see, even after the kites had made them aware of us, the Avenger's fifty didn't know yet that we weren't exactly the party they had come to meet. They didn't even grow suspicious until their shouts weren't answered—and that was a mistake on our part; but Jeremy, who was giving all the orders, hadn't time to consider everything.

Sensing danger in time to escape the trap, they scooted up the back out of the fiumara, spread out in a wide half-circle, and came on to draw our fire. Half of them were mounted on mighty good horses, and the speed of their maneuver put us at a terrific disadvantage for the space of about three minutes while we scrambled into new positions. If they had come straight on Lord knows what they might not have done to us; but, like the British fleet in the first attack on the Dardanelles, they didn't know. And it's what you do know that counts in the fighting business.

Narayan Singh, Ali Baba, Mujrim and myself were the first to open fire on them. Jeremy and Grim had their hands full getting the rest of our crowd into a new formation to meet the emergency. An example was the thing most needed, for if too many people try to give directions in a crisis, circumstances usually take charge and the last state of panic is worse than the first.

And here I have a confession to make. I suppose it's a proof of weakness; and all the missionaries I have talked with on the subject assure me I shall go to —— for it. And yet—I wouldn't confess (for why should I?) if I couldn't do so without qualms. I hate to shoot a good horse. Grim agrees with me.

I've had to deal with men who see snakes in delirium tremens, but I never wasted much time swatting the snakes. It was simpler and more efficacious to deal with the cause of them. And so, as has happened more than once in my career, when a horse comes at me with a man on his back, rather

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than shoot the horse, who is hardly a free agent, I prefer to put a bullet through the man.

I can do that without compunction, because, to my way of looking at it, the man is a free agent and the horse no worse than a willing servant. Nevertheless, I've been called a murderer to my face by a missionary, who left three tied horses without water during two hot days and complained afterward about his own hard luck.

"Well; there you are. I might have shot a horse, and that might possibly have had the same effect in the long run. But I picked out the leading man instead, and drilled him clean, and my three friends, crouching behind boulders on my right hand followed suit. I believe Mujrim missed, although he never would admit it, but at any rate, between us we tumbled three men out of the saddle, and one of them was dragged head-downward by the stirrup for half a mile before the horse stopped and came whinnying back.

That four-shot salvo saved an awkward situation for us, for the rest of the troop fired wildly from the saddle once or twice, wheeled sharp about, and galloped out of range, leaving the men on camels to make the next move. And while they thought about it, Grim and Jeremy had got our force straightened out, devised a plan, and got it fairly started.

Grim came running up with the rest of Ali Baba's men, and put me in charge of the lot, including Narayan Singh.

"Keep up a hot fire from here," he said. "Make them believe, if you can, that you're the main force. Don't spare ammunition. Don't move away from here; keep an eye on the Avenger's brother."

Having said that much, which was more than usual for him, for he doesn't often limit you, he went sliding down again into the fiumara. So I posted my men behind boulders and started up a rather long-range fire at the camel party, crawling from one man to the next to explain what was expected of us. Ali Baba snatched up the idea as a dog takes meat, and what with his croaking to his sons and my choosing one rock after another from which to fire several shots in rapid succession, I daresay we contrived a pretty good illustration of, say, fifty men at bay.

And neither the camelmen nor the horsemen opposing us dared approach the fiumara to discover how many we really were, or to take us in flank and rear, because of the possibility that we might have reserves down there in ambush.

Over my shoulder I saw Jeremy take most of his men, all mounted, straight up the fiumara in the direction from which the enemy had come. Grim, on the other hand, took twenty or twenty-five of Jeremy's crowd in the opposite direction, and in a minute or two the plan unfolded.

A QUARTER of a mile below us Grim led his small force out on to the plain, and the horsemen began to attack him mosquito-fashion, charging to within a hundred yards, to fire from the saddle, wheel suddenly and gallop out of range again. I hadn't time to estimate casualties, for the camel party seemed to have made up their minds that our whole force was now accounted for, and came at us headlong, yelling *"Allaho Akbar!"* shooting and flogging alternately.

But, you know, a man can't flog a galloping camel and shoot straight at the same time. They looked awfully ferocious, and I expect they would have scared the wits out of raw riflemen. They were brave, too, for I think they believed there were forty or fifty of us, and we had cover, whereas they had none unless you count the smoke-screen of sand the camels kicked up as they came, which went billowing down-wind until you couldn't see what was happening in Grim's direction.

But you couldn't find a tougher, less easily stampeded gang in Asia Minor than the party Grim had left with me. They spat on their cartridges and crammed them in like veteran soldiers instead of the thieves they were by trade, and each bullet was loosed on its way with an appropriate curse, until Narayan Singh on the far right laughed so that he could hardly shoot straight. And the camels went down one by one like great ships sinking, pitching up their sterns as they plunged bow first.

But that war-cry *"Allaho Akbar!"* is something more than a formula. It seems to fire the men who use it with a frenzy that bullets can't quench. Camels fell, but their riders charged forward on foot, and by that time they could guess how few we were, which added confidence to fury. The amount of nickel-coated lead that a charging Arab can eat up as he comes is incredible.

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There isn't an animal—not even a bear—that can compare with him. That gang of fanatics charged home—got right into the middle of us—and used their knives to such effect that Ali Baba and his youngest son Mahommed were the only two who hadn't some sort of wound to show by the time we had beaten off their survivors. We were lucky to have none killed. Mujrim's devotion was all that saved old Ali Baba's life.

My share was a blow on the head from the back of a sword that knocked me nearly unconscious for a minute; Ali Baba came and bent over me—thinking I was dead—genuinely sorry I believe—but anxious to acquire my watch (which is an heirloom). Two men sprang on him as his back was turned and his fingers just beginning to explore my shirt; Mujrim laid them out, and fought a duel with a third, bagging three to his own knife.

Those frenzied Arab charges, though, are like oncoming waves that have to recede when the momentum fails. Unless they accomplish their full purpose at the first shock they inevitably draw off and make ready for another and another, until there are none of them left to charge or the game seems hopeless.

I don't know how many we killed all told, for I was otherwise occupied when the time came for burying the dead, and Mahommed's song about it afterwards turned units into scores; but they left nine dead or dying among our clump of rocks. We had killed more than camels as they rushed us across the open.

The remnant ran at last as furiously as they had attacked, but by that time Jeremy's counter-attack was under way. He and about seventy camel-men swooped out on to the desert on the far right, cutting the line of retreat. I heard their roar rising in volume as they wheeled and started forward—caught sight on the left of the dust of horsemen reeling back in front of Grim—and that is all the account I can give at first hand of our pitched battle by the fiumara, for as my wits recovered from the sword-blow I recalled Grim's admonition to keep an eye on the Avenger's brother.

I looked about, but couldn't see him—couldn't see Ayisha either. They had been left close together in the fiumara just below the bank on top of which we took position, he tied hand and foot, and she glumly fingering her rifle—for she could hardly be expected to help us against her husband's men, yet couldn't rightly be regarded as an enemy.

Ayisha, to state it mildly, was on the horns of a dilemma. If we should be defeated and the Avenger's brother rescued, she would have to face that brother's charge of treason on her return home. On the other hand, she wouldn't be much better off if we should win, for she would then be in the hands of Jmil Ras, who had rejected her previous overtures and who, if he followed the usual course, would merely use her as a basis of exchange, in which case there would still remain the Avenger's brother's enmity to face; for he was quite sure to be ransomed and set free along with her.

It would have been easy for her to murder him, and I haven't a doubt she weighed that idea thoroughly. But I dare say, too, that she took into consideration Grim's wholly incomprehensible—to her—but pronounced objection to throat-slitting in such circumstances; and she had a sort of reverence for Grim that I think came closer to being in love in our Western meaning of the word than any emotion she had ever felt.

At any rate, what she did do was to try the other prong of the dilemma first, and since, she was dealing with another opportunist, it bent momentarily to suit her. She proceeded to make friends with the Avenger's brother—on her own terms, of course—and all the while that the fighting was going on she was negotiating with him the conditions under which she would cut the thongs that bound him and help him to escape.

If she could have been satisfied with just that, the two would have made their getaway and I would almost certainly have died before they did it; because it was after she had cut the thongs, and while the Avenger's brother was hiding between rocks, waiting for her to do the necessary scouting, that Grim's instruction to keep an eye on the two of them crossed my mind and I went to look.

But perhaps she wasn't any too sure of the newly purchased friendship. Most women in precarious positions have discovered that most men will promise them nearly anything in return for what they want at the moment, only to forget the promise when the time comes to repay; and though Ayisha was a most amazing optimist in some respects, she was cynical in others.

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She decided to take a magician with her to control events and conjure away mistrust, and I suppose she thought me too well attached to Grim to make the trouble of trying to persuade me worth the risk.

So she crept up the bank, and lay beside Narayan Singh. And because she had her rifle along and made some show of opening the breach, he supposed that she had come to fight beside him against her own folk. A man hasn't much chance to think reasonably when the "*Allaho Akbar*" roar is rising and bullets fly; nor has he time to make hot love or be polite. He had to be coaxed a good deal and mighty tactfully before we could get his version of the story afterwards.

"O mighty fighter!" she exclaimed, as she watched him lay cheek to the butt and blaze away. "They told me you Pathans were only boasters, but *Wallahi!* are they all like you?"

"May the father of mistakes who made this rifle die of palsy!" he growled back at her—a little flattered, no doubt, although as suspicious as he had time to be. "I got the misborn weapon from the governorate at El-Kalil, and its vomit goes a mile wide of every mark! See that—may rats gnaw the eyeballs of the maker of the thing!"

"But you are a magician! Male magic, and the rifle will slay two men with one bullet!"

He had presence of mind enough even so to try to preserve that fiction.

"Magic takes a certain amount of time," he growled back, jamming in another clip of cartridges.

But Lord! She was quick to use another's argument as cement and masonry for hers.

"True!" she answered. "This is not your business. My lord is wasting time and running great risk at work that is only fit for thieves. Come away with me, and use magic, and you shall be a great chief! Come! Come quickly! Come and hide among the rocks, and slip away, and leave these cattle to their own devices!"

"Go whither?" He had time to spare for only two words.

"To Abu Kem, to the Avenger. He is a great prince, who will richly reward a friend. And have I not listened times out of number to my lord's protestations of devotion? Am I deaf? Can a woman's heart be like steel forever? Come now and show me how you topple down the thrones of kings!"

According to his own account Narayan Singh found time between shots to make her a tactful answer; but my private belief is that he called her "*Umm Kulsum*," which is an opprobrious title, and told her to go to the good old-fashioned hot place that most of us would hate to think had been abolished. For then where could we send folk who don't like our points of view?

At any rate, she left him and went back to the Avenger's brother, and the two of them were conning their line of escape from behind a rock when I hurried down to look for them. It was only when Jeremy's attack began and our share in the fight was practically over that, fortunately for me, Narayan Singh grew really hot at the thought that Ayisha, or anybody else, should dare consider him corruptible. Anger increased suspicion, and he, too, turned toward the fiumara to discover what might be going on.

It was a big rock that the two of them were hiding behind. I looked around it, but they dodged me so silently that I didn't hear them. At the moment when Narayan Singh reached the edge of the fiumara and looked down, and I was on my way to investigate another clump of boulders, the Avenger's brother sprang at me from behind.

If he had knifed me to begin with I might feel differently about it, but he didn't try to use Ayisha's knife until he had tried first of all to pin my arms from behind and throw me. He said afterwards, and I believe him, that his first intention was to gag and leave me there; but of course he had no chance whatever of doing that to a man of my build and mere muscular attainments. I threw him forward over my head, but did not break his hold entirely, and he closed again, twisting round like an eel to face me.

It was then that he used the knife Ayisha had given him, stabbing me badly in the arm and following up by nearly braining me with the hilt. Coming on top of the sword-blow I got earlier his half-dozen hammer-strokes were too much even for my thick skull; but I didn't quite lose consciousness at once, contriving to clinch and lean my weight on him in the same sort of way that a beaten prize-fighter avoids being counted out.

But I got weaker every second, from the blows, not from bleeding—the cut in the arm was serious, but not enough to put me out of action—and if Narayan Singh

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hadn't turned up in the nick of time some other fellow would have had to tell this tale. It may be I've done Jeremy out of a profession!

But the Sikh did come like a landslide down the fiumara bank, swinging his rifle butt-end foremost, and the Avenger's brother had to take the heft of that on his collar-bone, which naturally broke. I was "out" by the time that happened—out, but, they tell me, still standing and clinging to my opponent; which may be true, but I think they lied to make me feel better about it afterward.

CHAPTER XII

"Ross, Ramsden and Grim. Grim, Ramsden and Ross."

I RECOVERED consciousness in a most extraordinary place, where they had laid me because it was cool, and my head along with the rest of me seemed to be immersed in hell flame before I was properly dead. As I came to I thought I heard war-drums near at hand, but that turned out to be nothing but my own pulse beating, although it was an hour or so before I realized the fact.

At the end of a century or so, that may actually have been an hour, or even less, after I came to my senses sufficiently to realize that the walls of the cavern weren't on fire but that my head was aching, Grim and Jeremy came and stooped over me, holding lanterns. Maybe I smiled; I tried hard enough.

"Not dead yet, you blooming immortal?" laughed Jeremy. "You cat o' nine-lives! Why, you old son of a gun! We carried you balanced on your belly on top of a camel, and you bled so much that the camel's flank looked like a sunset in Port Darwin! You've got no right to be alive! What have you done? Jumped your bail, or wouldn't the —— have you? Well; there's no need for you to believe in reincarnation; you can make the same old carcass serve you over and over, but it's a shame to cheat the worms that way. Sit up, and take a drink."

They had to help me up, but the drink worked wonders. I don't know how many halves of one per cent. it contained, but as I wasn't in the U. S. A., Hawaii or the Philippines, the Eighteenth Amendment doesn't cover the facts in this story. I felt better as the poison, if you like to call it that, crept through my vitals, and presently was asking questions.

"You're in my mine, old top. How long? Oh, two or three hours. It's nine o'clock tomorrow morning now; we marched all night and nearly killed the camels, but Grim said a little extra speed might save your bacon, and the darned fool insisted you were worth the trouble, so here we are. No, we didn't make 'em all prisoners; three or four got away—the horses were too fast for us. The Avenger has got a machine-gun or two, you know, and we expect he has heard the news by this and is oiling the works for a bit of strafing in return. We're making p ans to hold our end up, and as long as he don't turn out too many Sheikhs against us, you lay your money on this team, old son!"

He propped me against the wall and walked about with his lantern, doing showman. We were not in a tomb, but underneath one. Six enormous slabs of stone lay overhead, with their ends resting on a cornice hewn in the solid wall. A seventh stone, twenty feet long, about eight feet wide, and two feet thick, had either fallen or had been levered out of place, for it lay at an angle across one end of the cavern, with its upper end against the wall.

Perhaps it broke in falling, for there was a crack extending from end to end; they had thrust pieces of wood into the crack, to serve as a ladder. That was to my right hand as I lay.

To my left, where the last great overhead stone fitted snugly into its appointed place, a wide, hewn tunnel began, having straight smooth sides that widened perceptibly outward. At the entrance, where the tunnel was narrow enough, the roof was neatly arched, which I suppose really puts a date to it, although I don't know enough archeology to lay down law on that. Grim said something or other about the date that I've forgotten.

But the architect—for he was nothing less; he hadn't been satisfied with merely cutting out the quartz, but had left the mark of his orderly mind on everything he touched—had been no stickler for one style. He was as utilitarian as any builder of sky-scrapers on Manhattan.

As the tunnel widened and the overhead arc became too extended for safety, he had changed his system and cut nearly square, leaving finely rounded pillars down the

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middle of the tunnel to support the roof. He seemed to have cut the tunnel to the very edge of the quartz reef, leaving only patches of quartz here and there along the sides, where the reef had widened irregularly.

"Lord knows who he was," said Jeremy, "but I'll bet the old son-of-a-gun had a high-bridged nose and a chin like Julius Cæsar's. He'd ha' done for the British Army, he would! I'll bet he inspected the finger and toe-nails of each gang as it relieved the last, and worked 'em day and night in twelve-hour shifts. Look at the holes in the walls for torches. And see this thing? It's a knout-handle; the leather has rotted away, but there's an iron loop in one end to tie the lashes to, and the wood's all shiney from the sweaty fist of the overseer.

"But that's not half of it. It puzzled me for nearly a week to find out why the polish on the floor was different on this side of the tunnel from that side; it's all worn smooth by men's feet—you can pretty nearly slide on it where it dips—but one side's smoother than the other.

"I doped it out at last that the fellow with the knout stood here by the pillar directing traffic—you can even tell where a generation of the ——s rubbed their elbows on the stone. The gang returning light kept down this side to the right; coming up again with quartz rock on their heads they took the other side of the tunnel and produced a finer polish on the floor because they were heavier."

I asked him how long the tunnel was, and whether the reef showed signs of thinning out.

"Seventeen hundred paces. No, she's shaved off square across, and there are three parallel veins. I'd hate to tell you what she'll assay to the ton, for you'd call me a liar, and your head's too sore to be punched at present. Notice how fresh the air is?"

You can't notice everything at once when you've lain unconscious for a day or so, but now that he spoke of it the condition of the air did seem remarkable. There was even a draft.

"There's more than a mile of old tombs along the top," said Jeremy, "and every blooming one of 'em a ventilator! Here and there they're close together; in places they're a hundred yards apart; but there isn't one that hasn't a shaft let down through the floor as far as the tunnel, and there's only one way they could have cut them; they must have lowered a poor —— with a pick head-foremost, pulling him up by the feet when he had some loose rock. No doubt they strafed him with a knout between tricks.

"The Arabs hereabouts think those graves are holy men's, but my guess is as good as theirs, and I believe that once in so often the gang would get an overseer with a hunk of rock, or a pick, or something and the big boss would have him planted in state along the reef. All the tombs were sealed up. I opened them. Every blooming one was built with a permanent opening toward the prevailing wind, only a couple of inches deep from top to bottom, but two or three yards long. The tombs acted as sand-boxes; most of 'em are half-full of fine stuff blown in through the ventilating slit by the simoom, but they're so cleverly designed that hardly a ton of sand all told has got down into the tunnel in centuries.

"I tell you, Ramsden, old man, we don't know how to mine gold nowadays. We're savages! Good Lord! Why, they made old Charley Simms a lord for inventing a turbine ventilating fan that pretty nearly kills the gangs below-ground, but this old cousin of King Solomon, or whoever he was, probably got knouted for doing a ten-times better job without a fan at all! This old codger was a sure-fire conjurer; our modern engineers are clumsy boobs!"

Under the spell of Jeremy's enthusiasm I began to feel strong and, as a man will do with the fever on him, insisted on being shown more. And as neither Grim nor Jeremy had allopathic theories to prove whether the patient died or not they let me have my way, and leaning between them I saw a lot of the wonderful shaft before surrendering again to weakness and having to lie down.

But even so, the exercise did good. I have seen it work equally well with animals and men; and, though the doctors call me a "lay theorist," which is bad language camouflaged, I maintain that walking about, if you can do it, makes the blood function normally and reduces fever. I know it cleared my head, and although I couldn't stand I was able to go on listening to Jeremy.

"Now, see here, Rammy old top, we're friends, aren't we. I got you out of a —— of a mess once in Germany, when you

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wanted to fight the Prussian army" (Can you beat that?) "and I enabled you to score off the provost marshal in Cairo. You owe me a good turn. I've been talking to Grim, but every time I press my proposition he comes the bally major over me. I can't argue with him man to man. The son-of-a-gun listens, and then tells me I'm a trooper.

"But you're not in the —— British Army, so he can't play that game with you. We've got a mine here that's worth millions any way you look at it. You talk Grim round—sit on his head when you feel a bit stronger, and punch him until he sees sense—and we three 'll be mining mates—keep it between us and clean up!"

I LEANED up against the wall and looked at Grim, who smiled exactly as I have seen financiers do when I wanted money for a prospect. You know the attitude? The thing looks good; they know you're telling truth and keep your promises or bust; but they've got other irons in the fire—know things that you don't know—and nothing's doing. One of these days some fortunate billionaire is going to find Grim out of a job for the moment and hire him. There'll be a whole new chapter then to be added to the secret chronicles of high finance.

Most of us show our hands too soon. Jeremy always does, except when he is conjuring, and I nearly always do, although I know what a mistake it is. Grim shows his, if anything, too grudgingly. But he always wins. All he chose to do just then was to point out the flaws in Jeremy's proposal, like a banker with a would-be borrower in front of him.

"You see, Jeremy, as long as you're a trooper you can't do a thing."

"But you can!"

"No. I'm in the army. I'm not allowed to engage in private business."

"Well then, quit the army! Turn in your perishing papers! What are you doing in the British Army anyway? You're a Yank. Get out of uniform and get rich!"

Grim shook his head.

"Can't do that, Jeremy. The army can rub along without me, but I need the army just at present."

"Well then, —— it! Ramsden can turn the trick. Let Rammy own the mine. He's white. We'll divvy with him on the q. t. until we both get our discharge, and draw up a deed of partnership afterward. I've dollied out enough gold to finance us for a fair start. We'll make the thing pay as it goes, and to —— with banks and the stock exchange!"

You may bet that my ears were pricked. You forget a headache and a sort of foolish feeling in the stomach, when the dream of a lifetime looks like coming true. Most professional prospectors hope eternally for a gold-mine rich enough to pay its way from the start, and I'm no exception. But Grim still wore the high-financial smile.

"There's no law in Arabia, Jeremy old man, that would let you work the mine or give you title to it. There's no mandate here yet, and no government that could take that responsibility."

"—— all governments!" exploded Jeremy. "We'll keep the thing secret."

"Can't be done," Grim answered flatly.

When some men say a thing is impossible it makes any fellow with sand in his gizzard just that much more set on accomplishment. But even Jeremy, born optimist and independent enthusiast, realized that Grim wouldn't talk that way unless he knew whereof he spoke.

"What do you mean? Why, I can make ten times your salary at the end of this shaft single-handed! You can't kid me there's no way of working the thing."

"There's a way," Grim agreed, "but not yet, because you can't possibly keep it secret. You've been quiet, haven't you? You've fooled the Arabs mighty cleverly with tales about a white stone you're looking for and dead men talking from their graves. Yet I knew about your mine even before you sent to El-Kalil for picks and shovels. I don't mean that I knew all the details, but I had enough information to make the trip out here worth while, and I'd have come in any case."

"All right. You're one who knew. Who else had as much as a suspicion?"

"Half a dozen people. Besides, I shall have to turn in a report on this. I'm on oath—Intelligence Department—the Administration trusts me to investigate rumors and turn in facts."

"You mean you're going to blab?"

Jeremy looked scandalized, and Grim laughed.

"Don't worry! There are may be a dozen excellent reasons why the Administration

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won't want this thing talked about. Imagine what it would mean if Ben Saoud in the south, or the King of the Hedjaz, or both of them got word of it. There'd be civil war within the week. Next, Mustapha Kemal, who needs money like the ——, would horn in from the north. Then you've got the Zionists to think of, with all their political influence; and the whole horde of Levantine financiers, who'd start pulling Foreign Office wires. Better a million tons of TNT than a gold-mine in this part of Arabia just now!"

"But here's the mine!" said Jeremy. "What are you going to do with it?"

"That's up to you," Grim answered.

"No 'tisn't! —— it, man, the minute I make a proposal you remind me I'm a trooper."

"All right," said Grim. "Suppose we drop all that—forget that either of us ever saw the army—and settle this between us three?"

"Good! Now you're talking. Go ahead. Here's a mine worth millions. What do you suggest?"

"Close it down. Seal it up. Forget it for a while," Grim answered.

"What? And leave it for the first chink or Indian or Arab who stumbles on it to jump and treat me to a ha-ha! Think I'm crazy? I've got two thousand pounds' worth of the yellow stuff, won from the reef with my own two hands, that says I'm not!"

"Pull your freight, then, while you've got it, Jeremy. That's my advice. You can stay here if you like, but you won't last long; the rival interests will tear you like a pack of wolves, once the facts leak out, as they must sooner or later. Whereas Feisul——"

"Ah!" said I; for like a flash I saw Grim's meaning, although Jeremy didn't.

"They tell me Feisul's down and out," said Jeremy.

"He is and he isn't," Grim answered. "He's still in Damascus and the Syrians have proclaimed him king. But the French hate him, and are watching their chance to turn him out. They'll do it, too. But Feisul has lots of friends, including most of us who fought behind him in the war."

"You bet!" nodded Jeremy. "Feisul's a white Arab. I'd fight for Feisul against the French any day of the week."

"Well; Feisul is going to be the ruler of this part of the world before long," Grim continued. "He'll have to bolt from Damascus, for the French have poison gas, and Feisul's army has no masks. But he'll go to Europe—I know that because I've discussed it with him—and he'll tell his own story where it will do the most good. The politicians will be powerless after that to do anything but keep the promises that were made to him as an inducement to come into the war on our side, because when voters know the truth the men in office have to watch their step."

"What'll they do, do you suppose? Order the French to reinstate him in Damascus?" asked Jeremy, and Grim and I both laughed for that was as typical of Jeremy as anything well could be. He is a trickster with his hands, and an expert at ballyhooing the spectators of his magic, but he can never think of any but the shortest cut to whatever he considers reasonable.

"Hardly," Grim answered. "You and I might offer to punch another fellow's head unless he did the right thing, but nations don't act that way after a long war. They'll contrive to save each other's faces."

"What'll they do then?"

"Find a new throne for Feisul, and there's only one that's possible."

"You mean this country? Lord pity him!"

"I mean Mesopotamia. This will be an annex to it; and Feisul is the only man living who can straighten things out from the Jordan to the Persian Gulf."

"All right," said Jeremy. "Good luck then to Feisul. But what has all this got to do with my gold-mine?"

"If you keep quiet about the mine, old man, and Feisul is made ruler of Mesopotamia, he'll be the fellow who can give you title to the mine."

Jeremy brought his open palm down on his thigh with a slap like a gun going off.

"Don't you believe it! I'm no hand at politics, but I know better than that! If they make Feisul king, they'll send him back here hog-tied with agreements to give the oil concessions to this financial gang, the gold to that one, and the railways and rivers to some one else. Good by me and any chance I might have had of getting title to as much as a tomb to be buried in!"

Jeremy's good-natured face was now a picture of chagrin. He was much too intelligent not to see the truth of Grim's contention, but that did nothing to dull the

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edge of disappointment. What with my headache, and liking Jeremy so much—to say nothing of the glamour of that mine, which is a glamour that gets you harder the oftener you experience it—I could almost have wept for him. You know, a fellow gets weak and foolish when his head has been beaten a good deal with a dagger-hilt.

But there was an expression on Grim's face that I had learned to recognize, and I knew we hadn't got the last of his opinion yet. What he had said so far was by way of a barrage laid down in preparation for assault; he would unpack the punch in a minute. I felt sure of it, and as it turned out I was right. So I shed no idle tears in Jeremy's behalf.

"Don't forget, old man, that Feisul's white," Grim said, with his eyes fixed steadily on Jeremy's.

"He might be an angel, without being able to beat those politicians!" Jeremy retorted. "Didn't you say you know where there's dynamite hidden? I'm going to blow the blasted mine to ——!"

"How about giving it to Feisul?" Grim suggested.

"What? Say that again!"

"Just now you promised to give it to Ramsden and trust him to divvy up afterwards. Why not treat Feisul that way instead?"

"What? Me partners with a king?"

"You and Ramsden. Why not?"

"Say; now you're talking again! D'you suppose—Oh, but what's the use of kidding at a time like this? Let's blow the mine up. How much dynamite is there in that cache of yours?"

"You see," Grim went on, "if you and Ramsden were to go to Damascus and see Feisul—I'd give you an introduction—and if you were to tell him about this mine of yours and make him an offer, his hand would be a whole lot stronger when the time comes to deal with those political-financiers in Europe. He won't have to give concessions in return for cash, or bargain away a shred of independence.

"What's more, if he has this mine to draw on he won't have to tax the Mesopotamian Arabs to the point where they rebel. And I know Feisul. He's a fellow you can bet on. All you'd need do is to get his signature to an agreement giving you the right to work this mine on royalty, and when he's made king he won't go back on it.

"It's the only chance you've got, but it's a chance to do more than make a pot of money. You'll be helping put the right man in the right place, and you'll spike the guns of half the money-pirates of Europe."

"And I'd rather do that than eat!" said Jeremy piously.

"Well?" Grim answered. "What about it? It's up to you, as I said in the first place."

Jeremy crossed his legs in front of him and knitted his brows, rather like a terrier puzzled by a blank wall. He thought, and scratched his head, and smiled for several minutes, and chuckled finally, as I had seen him do years before when a more than usually smart performer did a sleight-of-hand trick better than Jeremy's own.

"But who's going to engineer the closing of the mine?" he asked at last. There was a new-old light in his eye now, and Grim not only detected it, but understood it.

"You," Grim answered. "Who else?"

"Um-m-m! Might be done. Can do, as the chinks say. How much cyanide did you bring?"

"A whole drum. A hundred pounds of it," said I.

"Well, see here; if that fellow Feisul comes the king at me, and tries to treat me as a trooper, Lord love him, for he'll need it! I'll close the mine, and make Feisul a fair offer. If he accepts it, well and good. If he says no, I'll come back here and play a lone hand. But if he tries to trick me with promises and fair words, or gives me as much as a suspicion that he means to jump my claim when the time comes, I'll kick his royal backbone out through the jewels in the crown he wears for a hat, and they'll have to round up another emperor for Mespot. Rammy, old top, you and I once kicked a Prussian colonel; will you double up with me again and hold a king while I put my boot into him?"

I nodded, not that I had any doubt of Feisul; whoever has met him, and isn't a Frenchman with ambition to turn Syria into another Algeria, respects that man and trusts his given word. But I would play a busted flush against four kings for Jeremy's sake.

"Better soak me with the responsibility," said Grim. "I know Feisul better than either of you two fellows do. Jeremy doesn't know him at all, except by hearsay.

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I'll endorse Feisul's paper in blank, as it were."

"Meaning exactly what?" asked Jeremy.

"That if Feisul breaks his word to you, we'll reckon it as if I'd broken my word. In that event I'll let you name the penalty."

Jeremy grinned hugely.

"All right, old top, I'll name it now. We'll play this like one of your U. S. election bets. If Feisul makes a bargain with me and breaks it, you quit the army and come to Australia as junior member of the firm of Ross, Ramsden and Grim. You start at the bottom as office boy—lick the stamps—polish up the brass plate on the door—argue over the phone with central—live for a year on thirty bob a week—and don't get promoted to a partnership until we own a mine as good as this one!"

"And if Feisul makes you a promise and keeps it, what then?"

"Why, then we'll be Grim, Ramsden and Ross. Rammy's head ain't delivering its rated horsepower just at present, so he can't say no to anything. You'd better not try, Rammy; there are several sore spots on you that I could land on!"

"Very well; we'll call that a bet," said Grim. "Shall we write it down? But remember, I don't guarantee to join the firm unless I lose. If I win, I have the option to become a partner. That right?"

"Sure. Senior partner if you win."

Jeremy wrote down the terms of the bet in Grim's memorandum book, and though he would have it that my brains weren't functioning, it was I, not he, who detected a nigger in our woodpile.

"Feisul's good faith is a cinch," I said, "but how about that report that Grim must turn in at headquarters? Are you going to cook it, Grim?"

"No, sir."

"Then what? Suppose some snooping office clerk gets hold of it? He could sell his information to a Levantine, or in London, Rome, Paris—anywhere. There'd be gangs with some Foreign Office pull out hunting for Jeremy's mine like cruisers picking up a derelict; and if the Arabs tried to prevent 'em there'd be a new war, that's all. How are you going to keep your end of the secret, Grim?"

"Easy enough," he answered. "I report direct to the Administrator. He'll have to share the confidence with his Chief of Staff and three or four others; but every single one of them is pro-Feisul. There'll be nothing put in writing beyond a bald and rather vague account of my journey to this place. The Administrator will send a private report to London, but if he calls this mine "ancient workings," such as are known to exist all over Arabia, that will only interest the archeologists. And if he adds that steps were taken to prevent desecration of ancient tombs by private adventurers nobody will be in any hurry to investigate. There's only one chance for a leak that I can see."

"Then sit on it and keep the water out!" said Jeremy.

"That gold that you sent to El-Kalil. It was bought by the bank in Jerusalem."

"There's going to be more of it, too," said Jeremy. "I'm going to take a bagful of the stuff away with me, and cash it in, for I'll need money."

Grim sat tight and looked puzzled for several minutes, like a player studying a chess-board.

"We'll, manage that all right," he said at last. "Didn't you come here all the way from Yemen, Jeremy?"

"Sure did. Got fifty witnesses. Ask some of my bob-tail following. Pick out the lads who had to hoof it while I rode a camel."

"Well, we needn't lie about it. We'll contrive to tell the truth to any one who's curious in such a way that he'll conclude you brought the gold from Yemen."

"And that's a thousand miles from here," remarked Jeremy rather boastfully. But I think that if I had accomplished this feat I might be tempted to boast too.

Grim pocketed his memorandum book with an air of having closed a satisfactory deal.

"So that's all settled. Good. Now let's put Ramsden back to bed, and go and look at the defenses. If I know the Avenger—and I think I do—he'll come for us with all he's got. Just at present he'll be rounding up some other Sheikhs to help him; but he'll come quick before their enthusiasm wanes. Let's go."

"Lord! This is the life!" laughed Jeremy. "Sundowner one day. Millionaire mine-owner the next. Now turn politician and shuffle thrones—me that would kid a king as quick as look at him! Suits me all right! Come on."

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CHAPTER XIII

"Oh, I say!"

I MADE the swift recovery that men of my type usually do. It is the ultra-sensitive and subtle-minded fellows who linger in bed after an accident; the less abstract the mentality the quicker its recovery, until you get away down in the scale to the lobster and the lizard, who can grow a new claw or a tail without troubling the doctor.

I lay through the day, but was tired of inactivity by nightfall; and even though the Avenger's brother with his broken collar-bone, and Ali Baba and Narayan Singh all came and talked with me on Jeremy's roof under the stars—for they weren't allowed into the mine and knew next to nothing about it—I had a hard time to idle through the following night, and dawn found me, if not yet fit for work, still less fit for doing nothing.

The Avenger's brother—his name was Achmet by the way—took quite a shine to me because I didn't resent his blows on my skull. But unless he had used the blade of the dagger first and killed me from behind, I don't see what else he could have done, do you? He had a perfect right to try to escape and I was looking for him on purpose to prevent that very thing.

It wasn't a case for resentment at all; and besides, he had much the worst of it, for his broken collar-bone had pierced the flesh and the wound, together with Grim's and Jeremy's amateurish surgery, caused him a lot of pain, which he endured, however, like a man.

"I will see that your life is spared when my brother comes, Ramsden Effendi. He will deal with Jmil Ras as with a scorpion that he crushes underfoot," he assured me. "But you and Jimgrim shall be set free, because Jimgrim is his friend and you mine."

At that old Ali Baba snorted like a blowing grampus. He and the Avenger's brother were hardly on terms at all, and only tolerant of each other's company because there was no alternative. Ali Baba was really acting jailer, although he did not emphasize the point; as captain of our gang he ranked next after Grim and me, so Grim had chosen him for the task in order to show as much respect toward the Avenger's brother as was possible in the circumstances.

"Wait and see!" he advised, nodding his old head sagely. "You think that the Avenger can sweep all before him; and he certainly must try for his own honor's sake. If he doesn't try to destroy Jmil Ras after this, his own men will laugh at him. But Jmil Ras holds Jimgrim, and Jimgrim has the brains."

"What of that?" the Avenger's brother sneered. "A prisoner can be made to talk; he can be made to work; he can even be made to fight grudgingly against his own side; for few men suffer torture very long without yielding up their will. But who knows how to make Jimgrim think, or how to make any prisoner think? Can you make me invent for you a way out of your difficulty, and teach you the way?

"No! Neither, then, can Jmil Ras make use of Jimgrim's brains. Make thy peace with Allah, Oh ancient of days, for the Avenger will tie thee to a gate-post in the sun, and where the ropes cut the skin the ants will enter!"

"Jmil Ras has bought Jimgrim," Ali Baba answered. "Gold is the stuff that can make a prisoner think."

"*Mashallah!* My brother the Avenger has more gold tham Jmil Ras, and Jimgrim must know that."

"Maybe," Ali Baba retorted. "But he is meaner with his gold. This fellow Jmil Ras acts like a prince. He has paid me my price and the half again added to it. He will buy Jimgrim in the same manner, and you shall see a plan born that will leave Jmil Ras contented, the Avenger obedient, and Jimgrim smiling; because that is Jimgrim's way. I know the man. *Wallahi!* I am the cleverest thief in all these parts, yet Jimgrim had the better of me; and if he can do that he can trap and defeat any ten Avengers! Wait and see!"

And then came Ayisha, equally a prisoner and deprived of her rifle at last though not of liberty to come and go within definite limits. She looked askance at Narayan Singh and laughed openly at me.

"Aha! *Miyan*, little use was thy magic against a man's blows! A *millieme* for such magic! And the other great magician had to use a butt-end to protect you! Bah!"

She evidently shared the opinion that the Avenger would come presently and capture the lot of us, and had made up her mind finally as to which side her own bread was buttered. She went straight to the Avenger's brother and rearranged his cushions,

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rewetting the sponge under his arm, and doing all she could to keep his favor.

It was well that she chose that course, for though her forecast of events was wrong as it turned out, it would have been awkward for us, and worse for her, if the Avenger's brother hadn't approved of her. There are much more pleasant fates than that awaiting a disloyal woman in Arabia, and simpler tasks than finding a new husband for Ayisha.

We certainly couldn't have left her to her fate, if the Avenger's brother had seen fit to charge her with treason; but she had another shot in her locker yet, and took good care before the climax came to establish her position.

Grim spent all that night alone on the same roof, but aloof from us, "thinking fish," as Jeremy expressed it. Did you ever see a Cape Cod schooner captain go into a brown study for hours on end "doping out" where the cod will go to feed next? All born fishermen acquire ability to do that; so do big game hunters; I have astonished myself more than once after a long spell of camp life and shooting for the pot, by an uncanny ability to reason out where the game will be at any given moment.

Grim, I think, applies the same sort of mental process in dealing with human problems. He seems able to withdraw himself from immediate surroundings and to think as Arabs do—exactly like a schooner captain thinking fish—with the result that he knows in advance what they will do without their telling him, and can make use of his knowledge either to assist or confound them.

In that respect he's exactly the opposite of Jeremy, who stages his play on the spur of the moment as a general rule, confounding all adversaries by a combination of quick wit and pugnacity. Compared to either of them, I'm slow-minded—slow on my feet, too, having to make up for that by a kind of patient tenacity—a sort of heavy seige-gun of a man, more often than not exasperated by my own inability to size up situations quickly.

I DON'T think Grim slept at all that night. The roof we were on was the usual flat stone affair with a coping all around it—about the only roof in all that village that hadn't needed patching when Jeremy pounced on the place. The house underneath it, strangely enough, was in ruins, the second floor and one of the walls having almost totally collapsed; but the roof provided a good view of most of the country-side, so Jeremy had made it his watch-tower and called the comfortless barn underneath, headquarters.

From time to time Jeremy's snatches of song and his leisurely cavalry footstep broke the silence as he came to report to Grim some information brought in by a spy, or to ask advice about a change in the defenses; for, though I expect friend Jeremy would have resented deeply anything that smacked of interference, he is no such fool as to neglect opportunity; being told to do things, and getting good counsel when you ask for it are as the poles apart, especially if you're Australian.

It was on Grim's advice, reenforced by mine—for I'm a cautious man, not caring to bite off more than I can reasonably expect to chew—that Jeremy cut down ruthlessly the area he proposed to defend. The ruined, patched-up village, lay on the spur of a mountain, whose true name nobody knew, for only the goat-herdsmen pretend to local knowledge of geography, and though they can always find their way among the hills, and each height and ravine has a name as old as history, no two of them ever apply the same name to the same place—which adds variety, of course, and is a gorgeous ingredient for building lies, but annoys us matter-of-factish Westerners.

It was a rather straggling village. That long line of tombs interfered with its formation, there being a Moslem prejudice against digging foundations too near to ground made sacred by dead men's bones. Months ago Jeremy had joined up house to house, pulling down the worst ruins for material for his wall; but the egg-shaped enclosure thus contrived was too big for the three hundred men at his disposal, and the greater part of the night was spent in flattening one end of it, as well as in improving the roof stockades, so that an enemy seeking cover behind outlying ruins could be raked from more than one angle.

Totaling up, we had water enough to last forever; food enough for about three weeks, after which we would have to eat starving camels; about a thousand rounds of ammunition to a man—Jeremy having raided the supplies of more than one local Sheikh—

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and men who did not deceive themselves with any hope of quarter from the Avenger, and who would consequently die, if need be, in the last ditch.

On the other hand, the news brought in by Jeremy's spies was not reassuring. In the first place, the Avenger's city, as he called it, of Abu Kem was only twenty miles away; so he had a perfect base for operations and could launch his attack without being hampered by a long supply train—the bugbear of all who take the field. Added to that, there wasn't a Sheikh within fifty miles who hadn't been annoyed by Jeremy in one way or another, and though the Avenger was far too ambitious to be popular, and too powerful to be trusted, a common cause will unite the most suspicious rivals for a while, and Jeremy had provided just that.

One spy after another brought word that the Sheikhs of neighboring villages were promising support to the Avenger. Promises don't always amount to much in that land, but there came information of night marches toward Abu Kem, and as the night wore on there were watch-fires lighted on the hills within ten miles of us. The Avenger's brother grew jubilant at sight of them, and vowed that he knew by their arrangement whose fires they were.

"Five thousand men will come against this place at dawn!" he said confidently, Ayisha nodding confirmation of his guess. "Better send messengers and try to make terms. Perhaps, if you surrender all the arms and all the loot, and if the men agree to forsake Jmil Ras for the Avenger, even the life of Jmil Ras may be spared. My brother the Avenger is no hyena; but, by Allah, he makes his name good when men oppose him!"

Coffee was brought up to the roof just then, and I made that an excuse for going over to Grim's corner and telling him what the Avenger's brother had just said.

Grim nodded, and looked as if he expected me to understand the whole series of deductions that the nod meant.

"Out with it!" I urged him. "Coffee cuts grease; drink some and cough up what you mean!"

He put his head on one side and looked up at me with a humorous twinkle, and a twitch at the corner of his mouth.

"He sure did batter up that bean of yours!" he answered. "Doesn't it occur to you that if he still thought Jmil Ras was an Arab he'd never have suggested sparing his life? Dog eats dog, you know. They're more bitter against their own heretics and schismatics than against any foreigner. That fellow knows his brother's mind pretty nearly as well as you know what's in your pocket. They think like twins."

"Well, what do you make of it? Is his opinion good news or bad?"

"You bet it's good. Guess I was tired or something. I've been puzzling the blamed conundrum and had it all doped out except for that one obvious point. Honest; it never occurred to me! You've put the key into my hand."

"Not consciously," I said. "I don't see the point even now."

"I've been figuring all the while that the Avenger would insist on having Jeremy executed for desecrating tombs and working magic." He brought his hands together as if sweeping the chessmen off a board. "The Avenger is mate in one move. Feisul wins!"

Well; I've overlooked a bet or two in my day. I went hungry for three days once, with forgotten corned beef in the locker; and on another occasion I forgot that you can make fulminate from cyanide and quicksilver, and wasted I don't know how many days waiting for detonators. And there was nobody in those days to give my tired out thinking gear the necessary twitch, as it seems I did to Grim's. None the less, I can't help thinking that with all his mental alertness he would have found that loophole when the time came—as it did with disconcerting speed.

When the sun rose angrily above the skyline in a glowing smother of dust it was as if the vultures had been gathering overnight to attend our obsequies. There was no five thousand gathered against us—for Arabs exaggerate more wildly than the U. S. yellow press—but certainly two thousand riflemen were bivouacked in sight of Jeremy's crude ramparts; and, what was worse, they had green banners with them, which implied that the real issue had been cloaked in a religious garb, so that we had fanaticism on top of greed to deal with. Jmil Ras had been denounced as a heretic impostor, and the sure reward of paradise had been promised to all who might die in the effort to wipe him off the map.

But no man living could take down friend Jeremy's colors by any form of threat. He

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came up to the roof grinning his usual boisterous greeting to the world at large, and using astonishing profanity in Arabic—which is a language all Australians ought to learn, it was built for hard swearing.

"Say, Grim, old top; Hullo, Rammy, come here half a sec. Looks like the last trick, don't it? —— couldn't lick that outfit with a matter of three hundred men! There's more on the way, too; that Willy-boy Avenger has managed to persuade his pals that I'm easy, and there'll be a race in a minute to see who can be first over the wall. We might stop half of 'em if the luck runs right, but Lady Luck looks sick at her stomach. Some of my last-ditchers seem to think there's more room over the skyline to dig the —— thing, and I'm offering two to one that half of 'em will bolt within two minutes of the first shot; the sons-of-guns won't get far, but they'll take their chance on that."

"What'd you think you're driving at?" demanded Grim.

"Why, this—you're my prisoners. Don't matter how or why, but prisoners you are and you've got to obey me. Anything I say goes; d'ye get that? Now I say, Get to —— out of this! Take a man or two, look slippery, and hide among the rocks until this game's over. Soon as they've scuppered me they'll quarrel among 'emselves and hurry off to loot each other's harems; then you hit the trail for Jerusalem. Now, no argument! You take and do what I say!"

He looked pugnacious enough, with his hands on his hips and head to one side, and I for one knew there would be a row before we could convince him, because Jeremy with his mind made up is less amenable to reason than a mule. But there came a diversion in the nick of time, that brands me forever; and I don't know how to take the brand off.

Did you ever hit a woman? I did then. I hit Ayisha, and the weight of my left fist is no joke. The Avenger's brother was sitting on a pile of rugs and cushions in the middle of the roof, but I don't believe that he had anything to do with it. My judgment of the matter is that Ayisha thought she saw her chance to convince him finally of her loyalty. She was behind the Avenger's brother, and Jeremy's back was toward them. Grim and I were facing each other, with Jeremy between us in such a way that we naturally wouldn't notice much that might go on behind.

It was out of the corner of my right eye that I suddenly saw Ayisha spring to her feet and drive for the space between Jeremy's shoulder-blades with a knife about eighteen inches long. Lord knows where she got the knife; we had taken her own away from her. I knew it was Ayisha—never doubted that for a tenth of a second; and I didn't hesitate. I swung my left fist under the peak of her jaw and crashed her so hard against Narayan Singh, who was standing fifteen feet away, that the two went down together. There was no need to count ten. She was out; and she stayed out for several minutes.

"Oh, I say!" said Jeremy.

And Grim said nothing, which was worse. I pointed to the knife on the floor and said nothing too, for I hate a man who makes excuses. Having done a thing it suits me as a rule to face it out, a course which doesn't make black white by any means, but at least doesn't add yellow to it. Jeremy ignored the knife, shouted for water, went and picked up Ayisha, and laid her on the heap of cushions close to the Avenger's brother.

Grim didn't waste a second then on side-issues. He snapped into action like a piece of spring mechanism.

"Quick!" he said. "Before Jeremy gets back on the track! Remember you're an Indian now. Take Narayan Singh, and the two of you cross to the Avenger's lines. Tell him you've come from me—that I'm a prisoner—but that on my word of honor I can settle this to the Avenger's advantage if he will meet me in that old tomb half-way between our lines and his. Let him bring three or four men, and I'll bring three or four; and here, I'll give it you in writing; pledge my word that if nothing comes of the negotiations our side will take no improper advantage of him.

"You'd better tell him I've got Jmil Ras buncoed. You can also say that if he doesn't agree to meet me and discuss terms I shall take the side of Jmil Ras and there'll be a fight then that will cost him the utmost damage I can help Jmil Ras inflict."

I was glad enough to get away from there, even on such a dangerous mission as that. You fellows who haven't ever knocked a woman down with your fist may not believe it, but it makes you feel like a yellow hound, even when by doing it you have

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saved the life of such a man as Jeremy. It would only have made matters worse if Ayisha had found me standing over her when she came to; for the more guilty a woman is, the more bent she will be on contrasting the iniquity of some one else. There would have been a scene that would profit nobody.

So I stayed not on the order of my going, but beckoned my good friend Narayan Singh and started down the outside stone stairs at just about the moment when the first irregular salvo of rifle-shots announced that one of the Avenger's neighbors on the far right had elected himself conductor of the overture. The range was much too long for effect, but among rival Sheikhs it is something to be able to boast of leading the men who fired the first shots.

"That was a good blow you struck, *sahib*," the Sikh growled in my ear as we reached the bottom of the stairs. "If it broke a woman's jaw, what odds? It saved a man's life!"

But I think that in his heart he, too, regretted that I had struck it. If I had thought twice I should rather have struck Jeremy and knocked him sidewise out of the path of the knife. However, it's no use arguing after you have done a thing.

CHAPTER XIV

"By Allah, it is too late!"

IT TOOK us longer to get past Jeremy's defenses than you might expect. They tell me that Australians are shock troops, rather given to despising precautions and bent on winning every fight by speed, bravery and direct assault, with a quick-witted trick or two maybe thrown in now and then, just to prove what they can do when so disposed, but above all mockingly irreverent of every theory except one—which is, that Australia can't be beaten.

If Jeremy is typical, then that description of Australians is true. But perhaps he is unique, as his defenses surely were. They seemed to have been devised much less to keep out an enemy than to make it easy to sally forth and swat him.

There was excellent cover here and there for Jeremy's men, and the wall by which he had connected house to house was a good screen, but not much more, for there were gaps in it at frequent intervals, and where they were missing almost any man with hands and feet could climb it. I should say it was deliberately devised to tempt an enemy to attack without wasting time, but when I asked Jeremy about it afterwards he only laughed.

"Did you ever catch a showman telling how he turns his tricks?" he asked me.

Well; it was a chain of tricks that Jeremy had stretched around the place, and as it turned out it was I who had provided the star feature, but I did not know that at the moment. My head ached ——ably, so I sat in the gap of a more or less unfinished wall and let Narayan Singh scout about a bit for some way of reaching the Avenger's lines without being seen by either side until we might choose to show ourselves; for there was just as much risk of being shot from behind by some of Jeremy's enthusiasts as of being plugged from in front by the enemy.

And while he did that I observed Jeremy and Ali Baba followed by Ali Baba's gang lugging a great iron pot between them headed for the northeast corner of the wall at the point where Jeremy had shortened the line he proposed to defend. Of all the easily assailable points that corner looked like the weakest, so there was nothing wonderful about his posting Ali Baba there; that old rascal and his sons would give a costly account of themselves against any odds whatever, and if there was a trick to be pulled off they were the lads who would pride themselves on managing it perfectly.

Narayan Singh spied out the route at last and we crawled forward; but the oftener I looked back the less optimistic I became. Maybe the headache had something to do with that, but it seemed to me that if I were the Avenger I would attack that place rather than waste time talking.

Apparently the Avenger's temporary allies on his left wing shared my opinion, for they were following up their opening salvo by creeping closer, about four hundred strong, and taking up position to assault that obviously open corner where Ali Baba and his men were posted. There was nothing but a breast-high rampart of broken stone between them and our men.

So I hurried. If a fight could be prevented, the time to do it was while the issue was in doubt. It was a precious poor exhibition of scouting that Narayan Singh and I gave as we crossed the open ground toward the lip of the hill where the Avenger's black

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tent was pitched. We were seen when about half-way, fired at by a hundred men for several minutes, and were pounced on and roughly handled when we managed at last to hoist a handkerchief on a stick. The stick was shot out of the Sikh's hand before our surrender was accepted.

But they took us straight to the Avenger's tent, which after all was the main thing. And he, being a decent fellow after his own kind, cursed our captors roundly for having made us both bleed as they tore nearly all our clothes off. He did that even before he recognized me as the Indian who had accompanied Grim on that trip to Abu Lissan, when Grim got the better of him in a bargain.

"*Miyan*," he said then, stroking his fine black beard, "this is no way to have treated Jimgrim's friends. Those ——s of mine shall pay for it. What brings you?"

So I told him, giving Grim's message word for word, and adding that Jimgrim was confident of being able to persuade Jmil Ras.

"By Allah, it is too late!" he answered. "Nine other Sheikhs have joined me to make an end of Jmil Ras, and who shall stop them now? Look; they haven't waited for my order. I can hold my own men for a little while, because they know that if we attack first those others will loot our baggage; but once those neighbors of ours are over the wall, my men will follow. *Inshallah*, let Jimgrim not be slain by accident. Is my brother well?"

He said nothing about his wife Ayisha, because that wouldn't have been good manners; but I said that a member of his honor's family had done her best to make his brother comfortable, and he understood me. After that he cut the conversation short, because the fighting over on the left had started in real earnest.

All I could see for it was to hope with him that no half-dozen frenzied fanatics would find Grim and kill him before he could be protected. I didn't have much doubt of the Avenger's good faith; all tales about him, and our own experience of him in the past were in his favor; and he looked the part of a chivalrous and honorable chieftain, as he stood there with his arms folded watching the progress of events.

It wasn't easy to watch. We had to screw our eyes up, because a scorching hot wind blew toward us. I know I wouldn't have liked the job of facing it on camel-back, let alone on foot against defended ramparts. The obvious course would have been to make a circuit and attack from the other side, when the odds would have been reversed and the defenders blinded by the dust and heat; but the rival Sheikhs were too impatient to begin.

I don't think our side fired a shot until four hundred madmen densely massed in nothing remotely resembling a military formation broke cover from behind low rocks yelling "*Allaho Akbar*," and started to rush that weakest corner of the wall where Ali Baba lay hidden. And even then the firing on our side was feeble. It looked as if our men, with the dust and wind behind them and the wall in front, had lost heart already. There wasn't more than enough shooting to keep the assaulting force keyed up, and very few of them fell at first—not more than a dozen I should say—until a strange thing happened.

The hot wind increased in violence and the dust flew in a stinging cloud, but that hardly accounted for it, especially as the enemy rushed close and began to get a little protection under the lee of the low wall. But all at once they began to go down, face forward and writhing, numerically out of all proportion to the amount of firing from our side.

As the dust storm writhed and twisted it looked exactly as if it blasted them, until at least the half of the four hundred lay dead or struggling on the ground, and the remainder, covering their faces in their headcloths, turned and ran.

Then, and not until then, Jeremy's men opened up a really withering fire on them, raking and cross-raking them from the rear, and a murmur sounding almost like a prayer went up from the ranks of the Avenger's men.

But the attack wasn't over yet. There were other Sheikhs whose men proposed to show the runaways how real warriors attack a wall. Another roar of "*Allaho Akbar!*" broke out like a series of explosions, and eight hundred or a thousand men broke line to storm the whole line of the defenses. Not firing much—for the wind prevented that; they charged with their left arms held up to protect their faces and went like bolts into a sea of dust—they covered the intervening half-mile as if it were a race for money. And those on the right nearly

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reached the wall, making for the obvious gaps, where Grim and Jeremy directed a hail of bullets into them. There was hand-to-hand fighting in the breaches before the right wing of the assault reeled back.

But over on the left, where the bulk of the attacking force attempted to charge home and Ali Baba waited for them exactly the same thing happened as before. They went down in dozens and lay writhing, as if blasted by the dust.

"Uh! Poison gas," remarked Narayan Singh, standing on my right-hand. But I knew that Jeremy had no poison gas. How should he have? And on my left the Avenger expressed a different opinion.

"By Allah, that is magic! They have told the truth of Jmil Ras; he and the —— are in partnership!"

But I could see the Avenger's face, and there was a look on it of something rather less poignant than chagrin. It called for scant mind-reading to deduce that he didn't exactly resent seeing his neighbors' forces decimated. If he could make favorable terms now his own supremacy in that part of the world would be unassailable.

"Do you think Jimgrim would come out and meet me now?" he asked.

"*Inshallah*, why not?" said I. "If he should see you and me and my friend here advancing alone across the open he would come at once to meet us."

"By Allah, we will try it!" he answered.

But he harangued his own men first, displaying the sort of political opportunism that a man needs if he is to be a successful ruler almost anywhere. I wouldn't call him a liar exactly, that being a hard word, and he a fairly good sportsman with the game not won; besides, our daily papers set him the example.

"Now, ye impatient fools!" he thundered at them. "Now do ye understand why I ordered you to lie still? See what I preserved you from! Ye would have met the fate of those fools yonder but for my wisdom! By my beard and the Prophet's feet, ye would be no better than the goats without me to save you from destruction! Wait now and guard the baggage, while I go and settle this affair without losing one man's life!"

"*Wallah!* You seem to have faith in your star!" said I when he returned to the tent with two men whom he had selected to go with us.

"I have faith in Jimgrim," he answered. "Jmil Ras is too many for me, but Jimgrim will know of a way out of it."

We waited a few minutes yet while word went down the line that all firing was to cease pending the outcome of negotiations; and the word hadn't passed a dozen lips before it was twisted into a report that Jmil Ras had offered to surrender. Some of the men began putting up a pole to crucify him on. But that was Grim's affair; he had said he knew how to extricate Jeremy from the mess. Narayan Singh and I followed the Avenger and his bodyguard of two straight forward across the open, walking slowly to give Grim a chance to recognize us through his glasses.

And as I had predicted, Grim came out to meet us. But he surprized me, nevertheless, for he brought with him Jeremy and Ali Baba to offset the Avenger's two; and after stately and very formal greetings we all sat down in a circle beside a battered ancient tomb that afforded shelter from the wind and dust. Jeremy nodded to me with the brightest twinkle in his eye you ever saw—

"Thanks for the cyanid, old top!" he whispered.

"It was I who roasted it!" said Ali Baba out aloud, tapping his chest with conscious pride. "Did you see the ——s wilt under the magic?"

Then the business began; and because Grim led off it was shorter and more directly to the point than any other conference with Arabs that I ever listened to. Grim's face was stern, although Jeremy smiled all the while and kept up a running fire of jocular comments, mostly in undertones but now and then aloud.

"Now, O Avenger," Grim began, "I promised that if you should get into trouble I would come and help you in my own way. Here I am. Are you going to listen to me?"

"By ——, Jimgrim! This is my country from the Gates of Petra to the border of the Hedjaz; I will listen, but none shall dictate to me!"

"We'll see about that," said Grim. "Would you rather listen to me or to Jmil Ras?"

"Jmil Ras is a wicked ——, who must die!" he answered.

"*Taib!*" said Jeremy promptly. "Let you and me settle it together right here! Come on, I'm ready! Knives—pistols—swords—rifle—bare hands—if you want a piece of me, come and help yourself!"

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"You talk like a white man!" the Avenger sneered.

"Well, what in —— d'you take me for?" Jeremy retorted in English with a laugh. "D'you think an Arab would have let your brother live, or have respected your captured wife? You're a looney, that's what you are! Come on, old top; let's have it out and see who's the best man!"

"What does the madman say?" asked the Avenger; and his question put another weapon into Grim's hand.

"He is quite mad," Grim answered.

"Here—steady on, old top!"

"He is an Australian, whom Allah afflicted; but he eats out of my hand."

"Well I'm ——!" put in Jeremy.

"He thinks he is damned, and therefore that nothing matters," Grim continued. "Being, as he supposes, damned already he is not afraid to open tombs or to make use of witchcraft and black magic; but he hasn't harmed your brother or your wife. He will listen to me. But if you won't listen to me, then I will simply leave him here and let him do his worst. If, on the other hand, you wish me to take him away there is a condition that you must agree to first, taking oath on the name of Allah, and by your beard and your own honor and the honor of your sons."

"You say he hasn't hurt my brother?"

"Your brother has an injury sustained in fair fight, but he has been treated with respect and is satisfied on that score. You may have back your brother and the other member of your family, who is unharmed except for an accidental bruise on the jawbone——"

"By Allah!" chuckled the Avenger. "That may stop her talking for a while!"

"And you may have this place, and may take over all the followers of Jmil Ras——"

"Half a mo'! Half a mo'! Whoa, hoss!" said Jeremy. "There's ten of the blighters he can't have. Ten of 'em went underground with me and know the secret—or at least enough of it to give the game away. By crikey, they and I don't part company!"

"You may have all of his men who care to follow you, excepting ten, whom Jmil Ras himself will select," said Grim.

The Avenger's eyes were gleaming. The addition of about three hundred men to his force would be a victory in itself, for it would make his supremacy indisputable.

"By Allah, the condition! What is the condition? Name it!"

"You must agree to support Feisul. You must promise on your honor that when Feisul is proposed for ruler of Mesopotamia you will take his part with all your men and all the means at your disposal, receiving therefor proper dignity and treatment. And these tombs that have been opened——"

"*Wallah!* They must be closed again, and stay so! That —— Jmil Ras has brought enough sorcery out of them already to destroy the world! Have no fear about the tombs!"

"They must stay shut until Feisul opens them," said Grim. "Feisul is a direct descendant of the Prophet, who may do without harm things that other men may not do."

"*Taib.* But what if I refuse to support Feisul? I am the ruler of these parts. Let Feisul be king in Baghdad, and I will not prevent, but let him leave this part to me."

"If you refuse, you must fight Jmil Ras without my help," Grim answered. "I am his prisoner; I will return to the village with him and events must take their course. Perhaps you would like to send your men against his magic?"

"By ——, not I!"

"Then choose," Grim answered. "Feisul is a true prince, by blood, creed, honor and action. You are a man of honor, too. Which is better: To be a petty Sheikh, with this thorn in your side, and the hands of the friends of Feisul all against you to insure your downfall in any event when Feisul's day comes; or to be the powerful supporter of a king, with proper honor and reward?"

"*Mashallah!* You have a tongue of silver, Jimgrim!"

"And what are your ears—leather?"

"Nay, they are golden! I have nothing against Feisul. Let him be king, if he can accomplish it."

"That is not enough. Will you support him?"

"On your terms, and if Jmil Ras goes away, yes I will be for Feisul, if he can win the throne."

"Will you help him win the throne?"

"*Wallah!* What a persistent fellow! Very well, I will help Feisul."

"Do you swear it?"

"Yes."

"Let me hear you."

"By Allah and all His names; by the

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Prophet of El-Islam and all the holy saints; by the great Ali; by the Forty Martyrs; by my beard and my own honor and the honor of my sons, I swear to help make Feisul king, and to recognize him and support him, provided that Feisul recognizes me as first among the Sheikhs from Petra to the borders of the Hedjaz."

"All right," said Grim. "You have sworn before witnesses. As long as you keep that oath I'll be your friend. If ever you break it, I'm your enemy. Now shake hands with Jeremy Ross the Australian."

"*Wallah!* I would dread to do that. He is mad, and he has handled magic——"

"You can turn the magic away from yourself by shaking hands with him. Take my word for it," said Grim.

"By Allah, your word is good, but peace of mind is better! I would rather not."

But Jeremy had the solution all ready for that little difficulty.

"Put a bullet in the palm of your hand, and I'll give you a sure sign," he said, "that it's peace between us from now on."

The Avenger hesitated, but Grim urged him, and at last he worried out a nickel bullet from a new cartridge and laid it in the open palm of his right hand.

"Abracadabra!" said Jeremy. "Woolloomooloo! And three rousing cheers for my discharge!"

He seized the Avenger's hand, shook it once, and let go. The bullet had vanished, and a bright gold Turkish medjidie lay in its place, worth I dare say twenty U. S. dollars. The Avenger laughed.

"Can you do that always?" he asked.

"It happens as often as I make friends with a man," said Jeremy. "Don't spend that coin, though. As long as you keep it you're protected against magic. Now that I've made friends with you I'm going to stow the stuff that killed those fanatics yonder down into the tomb, and close it tight. And I'll put a spell on the tomb that'll keep the devils quiet. But if anybody except me, or Feisul, who's a direct descendant of the Prophet, dares to open the tomb, that stuff that killed those men will turn itself loose, and you'll all find —— comfortable in comparison."

It's easy, of course, from this distance to laugh at the Avenger for a simpleton; yet I've seen people in New York, who had a college education, deceived by quackery equally absurd and without any such object-lesson as the Avenger had just witnessed. There were more than a hundred men lying dead or dying within a half-mile of us, who bore witness to the deadly efficiency of Jeremy's magic. I think it would have been a marvel if he hadn't been convinced; for that is a land full of ancient superstitions, where the tales are mostly about jinn and ifrits, who perform incredible miracles whenever it suits the plot.

The Avenger in my judgment is one of the most decent and manliest Arabs I have met; and having witnessed that verbal agreement between him and Grim and Jeremy, it gives me pleasure to know that he has kept his part of it religiously, although how and when he struck for Feisul must be told another time. We are most of us superstitious in one way or another, and it is wisest not to sneer at a decent fellow who believes in devils and black magic but keeps his given word, come one come all, through thick and thin. I'll doff my hat to him or his brother any day.

CHAPTER XV

"Ali Baba! Ali Baba!"

THE Avenger's men had to bury the dead, for the other Sheikhs cleared out in a hurry, taking their wounded with them, for they questioned their own safety now that the Avenger's force outnumbered theirs; and their men, having had enough of it, were unmanageable.

Jeremy buried the remaining cyanid and closed up the tomb that covered the mouth of the mine with ceremony that would have done credit to any stage in the world. He caused the voices of the dead to speak out of the tomb, confirming his threat of what would happen if any one but Feisul or himself should dare to trespass in there; and he kept the ten men who knew the secret and had helped him dolly out the gold-dust standing near him, chanting a jingle he had taught them, while he himself did astonishing tricks of sleight-of-hand—pulling a live chicken in halves, for instance, and making two live chickens of it. There isn't a better showman in the world than Jeremy Ross.

We pulled our freight that evening. Thousands of successes have been spoiled by staying around to talk about them afterward. And besides, you couldn't have kept Jeremy Ross there another

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night without tying him hand and foot; he was like a boy released from school, dancing and singing and making a fool of himself until a saying started that they tell me has persisted until now—"as mad as Jmil Ras."

"Say, you chaps, come with me to Sydney! I'll show you the old Bull's Kid, and then we'll hit the grass trail—country where you can buy a horse for twenty pounds that can gallop all day long, and the girls have sweet red lips—Oh golly! I'm so sick of camels and the talk they sling out here that I'd swap my gold-mine for a billy and blanket and a six months' miner's right! Come, and I'll show you what life is!"

"What would you do with your ten Arabs?" I suggested, thinking that would faze him. But not a bit of it.

"Do with 'em? Why, take 'em along, of course. They wouldn't let 'em land in Sydney without a bond, but I've got money—and still more in the bank at home. I'll turn 'em into a traveling show—teach 'em tricks, and make their blooming fortune. They'll know where Allah lives when they've been in Australia half a day!"

However, that wasn't their destiny; there were other activities in store for Jeremy and Grim and me and them, as I hope to tell.

Meanwhile, our satisfaction was almost mild compared to that of Ali Baba and his sons. It was Ali Baba who had kept the fuel lighted under the great iron cooking-pot and sent the fumes of cyanid downwind, and his sons, who had defended him with rifles while he did it, were agreed that the honors were all his.

So Mahommed, his youngest-born, gang poet and sublime romancer, made up a song about it and they sang it on the march all the way home to El-Kalil. I don't remember nearly all of it, but I wrote down a few of the stanzas and have tried to translate them into English, though they lose most of their virtue in the process.

Who came out of El-Kalil?
Ali Baba! Ali Baba!
Bearing magic on his camels,
Ali Baba! Ali Baba!
Laughing scorn of the Avenger,
Making mock of all his numbers,
Giving confidence to Jimgrim,
Giving good advice to Jimgrim,
Ali Baba! Ali Baba!
He who rode from El-Kalil!

Who defeated the Avenger?
Ali Baba! Ali Baba!
In a battle in the desert,
Ali Baba! Ali Baba!
Conquered all the desert horsemen,
Made a prince's brother captive,
And rode on into the mountains
With his magic on the camels?
Ali Baba! Ali Baba!
He who rode from El-Kalil!

Then he mocked them in the mountains,
Ali Baba! Ali Baba!
And he called his sons around him,
Ali Baba! Ali Baba!
When a thousand desert chieftains
Swore to follow the Avenger
Bringing each a hundred horsemen
With their banners to attack him,
Ali Baba! Ali Baba!
He who honors El-Kalil!

But the father of fine magic,
Ali Baba! Ali Baba!
Swore by Allah to destroy them!
Ali Baba! Ali Baba!
He, the friend of all the ifrits,
He, the brother of the lightning,
Took a cooking pot of iron
And he filled it full of magic!
Ali Baba! Ali Baba!
He, the pride of El-Kalil!

Then the thousands came against him,
Ali Baba! Ali Baba!
A hundred times a thousand!
Ali Baba! Ali Baba!
But his magic made a tempest,
And he loosed the tempest at them,
And he mixed the magic with it,
So that Azrael* obeyed him!
Ali Baba! Ali Baba!
He who rode from El-Kalil!

So they cried out as they perished,
Ali Baba! Ali Baba!
For the storm of dust obeyed him,
Ali Baba! Ali Baba!
And he smote them in their thousands,
He, the father of fine magic,
And they fell and died in thousands,
Oh, he slaughtered them in thousands!
Ali Baba! Ali Baba!
He whose home is El-Kalil!

Well—that's how history gets written. Mahommed, son of Ali Baba, is another man without a college education, and as full of superstition as a Jerusalem mattress is of bugs; but I'll bet you anything you like that his version of these happenings will outlive mine, and that long after Jeremy and Grim and the Avenger and I are in our graves they will tell the story in El-Kalil of how Ali Baba made magic and destroyed a hundred thousand men.

*The angel of death.

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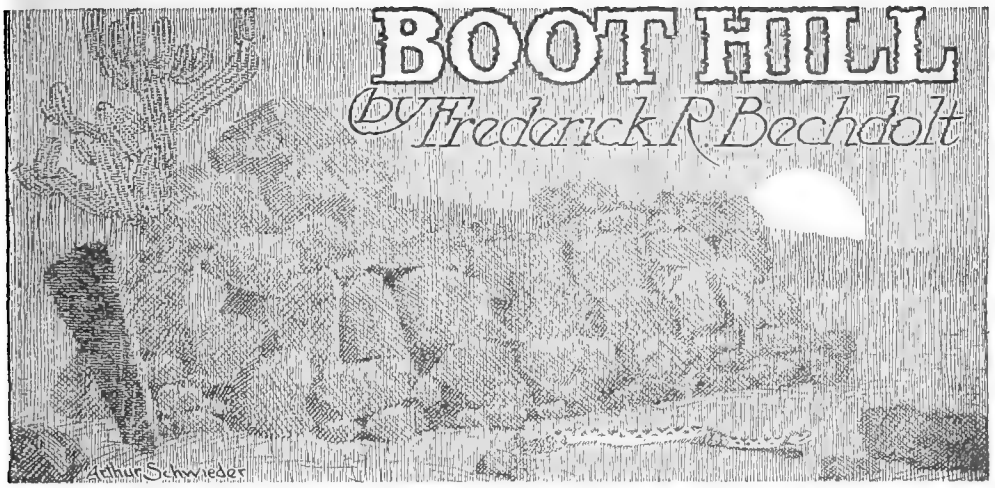

Author of "The Passing of John Ringold," "The Warriors of the Pecos," etc.

BOOT HILL! Back in the wild old days you found one at the new town's outskirts and one where the cattle trail came down to the ford, and one was at the summit of the pass. There was another on the mesa overlooking the water-hole where the wagon outfits halted after the long dry drive. The cowboys read the faded writing on the wooden headboards and from the stories made long ballads which they sang to the herds on the bedding grounds.

The herds have long since vanished, the cowboys have ridden away over the skyline, the plaintive songs are slipping from the memories of a few old men, and we go riding by the places where those headboards stood, oblivious.

Of the frontier cemeteries, whose dead came to their ends shod, in accordance with the grim phrase of their times, there remains one just outside the town of Tombstone to the north. Here straggling mesquite bushes grow on the summit of the ridge; cacti and ocatilla sprawl over the sun-baked earth hiding between their thorny stems the headboards and the long narrow heaps of stones which no man could mistake.

Some of these headboards still bear the traces of black-lettered epitaphs which tell how death came to strong men in the full flush of youth. But the vast majority of the boulder heaps are marked by cedar slabs whose penciled legends the elements have long since washed away.

The sun shines hot here on the summit of the ridge. Across the wide mesquite flat the granite ramparts of the Dragoons frown all the long day, and the bleak hill graveyard frowns back at them. Thus the men who came to this last resting place frowned back at Death.

There was a day when every mining camp and cowtown from the Rio Grande to the Yellowstone owned its boot hill; a day when lone graves marked the trails and solitary headboards rotted slowly in the unpeopled wilderness. Many of these isolated wooden monuments fell before the long assaults of the elements; the low mounds vanished and the grass billowed in the wind hiding the last vestiges of the leveled sepulchers.

Sometimes the spot was favorable; outfits rested there; new headboards rose about the first one; for the road was long and weary, the fords were perilous from quicksands; thirst lurked in the desert, and the Indians were always waiting. The camp became a settlement and in the days of its infancy, when there was no law save that of might, the graveyard spread over a larger area.

There came an era when a member of that stern straight-shooting breed who blazed the trails for the coming of the statutes, wielded the powers of high justice, the middle and the low. Outlaw and rustler opposed the dominion of this peace officer. Then the cemetery boomed like the young town. Finally things settled down to jury trials and men let lawyers do most of the

"Boot Hill," copyright, 1922, by Frederick R. Bechdolt.

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fighting with forensics instead of forty-fives. Churches were built and schoolhouses; a new graveyard was established; brush and weeds hid the old one's leaning headboards. Time passed; a city grew; the boot hill was forgotten.

This is a chronicle of men whose bones lie in those vanished boot hills. If one could stand aside on the day of Judgment and watch them pass when the brazen notes of the last trump are growing fainter, he would witness a brave procession. But we at least can marshal the shadowy host from fast waning memories and, looking upon some of their number, recall the deeds they did, the manner of their dying.

Here then they come through the curtain of time's mists, Indian fighter, town marshal, faro dealer and cowboy. There are a few among them upon whom it is not worth while to gaze, those whose lives and deaths were unfit for recording; there are a vast multitude whose heroic stories were never told and never will be; and there are some whose deeds as they have come down from the lips of the old-timers should never die.

Thus among the foremost pass lean forms clad for the most part in garments fringed with buckskin. You can see where some have torn off portions of the fringes to clean their rifles. Old-fashioned long-barreled muzzle-loaders, these rifles; and powder horns hang by the sides of the bearers.

They are long-haired men; and their faces are deeply burned by sun and wind; one hundred and eighty-three of them, and where they died, fighting to the last against four thousand of Santa Aña's soldiers, rose the first boot hill. That was in San Antonio, Texas, at the square called the Alamo; and in this day, when schoolboys who can describe Thermopylæ in detail know nothing of that far finer stand, it will do no harm to dwell on a proud episode ignored by most text book histories.

On the fifth day of March, 1836, San Antonio's streets were resonant with the heavy tread of marching troops, the clank of arms and the rumble of moving artillery. Four thousand Mexican soldiers were being concentrated on one point, a little mission chapel and two long adobe outbuildings which formed a portion of a walled enclosure, the Alamo.

For nearly two weeks General Santa Aña had been tightening the cordon of cavalry, infantry and artillery about the place. It housed one hundred and eighty-three lank-haired frontiersmen, a portion of General Sam Houston's band who had declared for Texan independence. The Mexicans had cut them off from water; their food was running low. On this day the dark-skinned commander planned to take the square. His men had managed to plant a cannon two hundred yards away.

When they blew down the walls the infantry would charge. It only remained for them to load the field-piece. Bugles sounded; officers galloped through the sheltered streets where the foot-soldiers were held in waiting. There sounded from the direction of the Alamo the steady rat-tat-tat of rifles. The hours went, by but the cannon remained silent.

A little group of lean-faced men were crouching on the flat roof of the Alamo's longer outbuilding. The most of them were clad in fringed garments of buckskin; here and there was one in a hickory shirt and homespun jeans. Six of them, some bare-headed and some with hats whose wide rims dropped low over their foreheads, were clustered about old Davy Crockett, frontiersman and in his day a member of Congress.

Always the six were busy, with ramrods, powder-horns and bullets, loading the long-barreled eight-square Kentucky rifles. The grizzled marksman took the cocked weapons from their hands; one after another, he pressed each walnut stock to his shoulder, lined the sights, pulled the trigger and laid the discharged piece down, to pick up its successor.

He crouched there on the flat roof facing the Mexican cannon. As fast as men came to load it, he fired. Sometimes a dozen soldiers rushed upon the muzzle of the field-piece surrounding it. At such moments Davy Crockett's arms swept back and forth with smooth, unhurried swiftness and his sinewy fingers relaxed from one walnut stock only to clutch another; his hands were never empty. Always a little red flame licked the smoke fog before him like the tongue of an angered snake.

He was getting on in years, but in all his full life his technique had never been so perfect, his artistry of death so flawless as on this day which prefaced the closing of his chapter. The bodies of his enemies clogged the space about their cannon; the rivulets of

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red trickled from the heap across the roadway. The long hours passed. Darkness came. The field-piece remained silent.

Long before daylight the next morning the four thousand were marching in close ranks to gather for the final assault. The sun had not risen when they made the charge. The infantry came first, the cavalry closed in behind them, driving them on with bared sabers.

The Americans took such toll with their long-barreled rifles from behind the barricaded doors and windows that the foot soldiers turned to face the naked swords rather than endure that fire. The officers reformed them under cover; they swept forward again, and again fell back.

Santa Aña directed the third charge in person. They swarmed to the courtyard wall and raised ladders to its summit. The men behind bore those before them onward and literally shoved them over the barrier. They overwhelmed the frontiersmen through sheer force of numbers. Colonel W. B. Travis fell fighting hand to hand here. The courtyard filled with dark-skinned soldiers.

The Alamo was fallen. But there remained for the lean hard-bitten men of Texas, who had retired within the adobe buildings, the task of dying as fighting men should die. It was now ten o'clock, nearly six hours since the beginning of the first advance. It took the four thousand two hours more to finish the thing.

For every room saw its separate stand; and every stand was to the bitter end.

There were fourteen gaunt frontiersmen in the hospital; so weak with wounds that they could not drag themselves from their tattered blankets. They fought with rifles and pistols until forty Mexicans lay heaped dead about the doorway. The artillery brought up a field-piece; they loaded it with grape-shot and swept the room, and then at last they crossed the threshold.

Colonel James Bowie, who brought into use the knife that bears his name, was sick within another apartment. How that day's noises of combat roused the old fire within his breast and how he lay there chafing against the weakness which would not let him raise his body, one can well imagine. A dozen Mexican officers rushed into the place, firing as they came.

Colonel Bowie waited until the first of them was within arm's length. Then he reached forth, seized the man by the hair and, dying, plunged the knife that bore his name hilt-deep into the heart of his enemy.

So they passed in stifling clouds of powder smoke with the reek of hot blood in their nostrils. The noon hour saw Davy Crockett and five or six companions standing in a corner of the shattered walls; the old frontiersman held a rifle in one hand, in the other a dripping knife, and his buckskin garments were sodden, crimson. That is the last of the picture.

"Thermopylæ had its messenger. The Alamo had none."

So reads the inscription on the monument erected in later years by the State of Texas to commemorate that stand. The words are true. But the Alamo did leave a memory and the tale of the little band who fought in the sublimity of their fierceness while death was slowing their pulses, did much toward the development of a breed whose eyes were narrow, sometimes slightly slanting, from constant peering across rifle sights under a glaring sun.

THE procession is passing; trapper and Indian fighter; teamsters with dust in the deep lines of their faces —dust from the long dry trail to old Santa Fé—stage drivers who have been sleeping the long sleep under waving wheat-fields where alkali flats once stretched away toward the vague blue mountains; and riders of the pony express. A tall form emerges from the past's dim background, and comes on among them.

Six feet and an inch to spare, modeled as finely as an old Greek statue, with eyes of steel gray, sweeping moustache and dark brown hair that hangs to his shoulders, he moves with catlike grace. Two forty-fives hang by his narrow hips; there is a hint of the cavalier in his drooping sombrero and his ornately patterned boots. This is Wild Bill Hickok.

He was to have gone with Custer, but a coward's bullet cheated him out of the chance to die fighting by the Little Big Horn and they buried him in the Black Hills in the spring of 1876.

James B. Hickok was the name by which men called him until one December day in the early sixties when the McCandless gang of outlaws tried to run the horses off from the Rock Creek station of the Overland

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Stage Line on the plains of southwestern Nebraska near the Kansas boundary.

There were ten of the desperadoes, and Hickok, who was scarcely more than a boy then, was alone in the little sod house, for Doc Brinck, his partner, was off hunting that afternoon. He watched their approach from the lonely cubicle where he and Brinck passed their days as station keepers. They rode up through the cottonwoods by the creek. Bill McCandless leaped from the saddle and swaggered to the corral bars.

"The first man lays a hand on those bars, I'll shoot," Hickok called.

They answered his warning with a volley and their leader laughed as he dragged the topmost railing from its place. Laughing, he died.

Now the rifles of the others rained lead against the sod walls and slugs buzzed like angry wasps through the window. He killed one more by the corral and a third who had crept up behind the wooden well-curb. The seven who were left retired to the cottonwoods to hold council. They determined to rush the building and batter down the door.

When they came forth bearing a dead tree trunk between them, he got two more of them. And then the timber crashed against the flimsy door; the rended boards flew across the room; the sod walls trembled to the shock. He dropped his rifle and drew his revolver as he leaped to meet them.

Jim McCandless and another pitched forward across the threshold with leveled shotguns at their shoulders. Young Hickok ducked under the muzzle of the nearest weapon and its flame seared his long hair as he swung for the bearer's midsection with all the weight of his body behind the blow. Whirling with the swiftness of a fighting cat he spurned the senseless outlaw with his boot and "threw down" on McCandless. Revolver and shotgun flamed in the same instant; McCandless fell dead; Hickok staggered back with eleven buckshot in his body.

The other three were on him before he recovered his balance. He felt the searing of their bowie knives against his ribs as they bore him down on the bed. Fingers closed in on his windpipe. He seized the arm in his two hands and twisted it, as one would twist a stick, until the bones snapped. He struggled to his feet, and the warm blood bathed his limbs as he hurled the two who were left across the room.

They came on crouching and their knives gleamed through the thick smoke clouds. His own bowie knife was in his hand now and he stabbed the foremost through the throat. The other fled. Hickok stumbled out through the door after him and Doc Brinck came riding back from his hunting expedition in time to lend his rifle to his partner, who insisted profanely that he was fit to finish what he had so well begun.

So young James Hickok shut his teeth against the weakness which was creeping over him and lined his sights on the last of his enemies—for the man whom he had felled with his fist and he with the broken arm had escaped some time during the latter progress of the fight. That final shot was not so true as its predecessors; the outlaw did not die until several days later in the little town of Manhattan, Kansas.

When the eastbound stage pulled up that afternoon the driver and passengers found the long-haired young station keeper in a deep swoon, with eleven buckshot and thirteen knife wounds in his body. They took him aboard and carried him to Manhattan where he recovered six months later, to find himself known throughout the West as Wild Bill Hickok.

How many men he killed is a mooted question. But it is universally acknowledged that he slew them all fairly. Owning that prestige whose possessor walks amid unseen dangers, he introduced the quick draw on his portion of frontier; and many who sought his life for the sake of the dark fame which the deed would bring them, died with their weapons in their hands.

In Abilene, Kansas, where he was for several years town marshal, one of these caught him unawares as he was rounding a corner. Wild Bill complied with the order to throw up his hands and stood, rigid, expressionless, while the desperado, emulating the plains Indians, tried to torture him by picturing the closeness of his end.

He was in the midst of his description when Hickok's eyes widened and his voice was thick with seeming horror as he cried:

"My God! Don't kill him from behind!"

The outlaw allowed his eyes to waver and he fell with a bullet hole in his forehead.

As stage driver, Indian fighter and peace officer Wild Bill Hickok did a man's work in cleaning up the border. He was about to go and join the Custer expedition as a scout when one who thought the murder would

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give him renown shot him from behind as he was sitting in at a poker game in Deadwood. He died drawing his two guns and the whole West mourned his passing. It had never known a braver spirit.

THE silent ranks grow thicker; young men, sunburned and booted for the saddle; the restless souls who forsook tame Eastern farmlands, lured by the West's promise of adventure, and received the supreme fulfilment of that promise; the finest of the South's manhood drawn toward the setting sun to seek new homes. They come from a hundred boot hills, from hundreds of solitary graves; from the banks of the Yellowstone, the Platte, the Arkansas and the two forks of the Canadian.

There are so many among them who died exalted that the tongue would weary reciting the tales. This tattered group were with the fifty who drove off fifteen hundred Cheyennes and Kiowas on Beecher Island. The Battle of the Arickaree was the name men gave the stand; and the sands of the north fork of the Republican were red with the blood of the Indians slain by Forsythe and his half hundred when night fell.

These three who follow in boots, jean breeches and Oregon shirts are Billy Tyler and the Shadler brothers, members of that company of twenty-eight buffalo-hunters who made the big fight at Adobe Walls. The sun was just rising when Quanah Parker, Little Robe and White Shield led more than eight hundred Comanches and Kiowas in the first charge upon the four buildings which stood at the edge of the Llano Estacado, one hundred and fifty miles from the nearest settlement.

The Shadler boys were slain in their wagon at that onslaught. Tyler was shot down at midday as he ventured forth from Myers and Leonard's store. Before the afternoon was over the Indians sickened of their losses and drew off beyond range of the big caliber Sharps rifles. They massacred one hundred and ninety people during their three months raiding but the handful behind the barricaded doors and windows was too much for them.

Private George W. Smith of the Sixth Cavalry is passing now. You would need to look a second time to notice that he was a soldier, for the rifle under his arm is a long-barreled Sharps single shot and he has put aside much of the old blue uniform for the ordinary Western raiment.

That was the way of scouting expeditions, and he, with his five companions, was on the road from McClellan's Creek to Fort Supply when they met two hundred Indians on that September morning of 1874.

Up near the northeast corner of the Texas Panhandle, where the land rises to a divide between Gageby's Creek and the Washita River, the five survivors dug his grave with butcher-knives. They pulled down the banks of a buffalo wallow over his body, in the darkness of the night; and they left him in this shallow sepulcher, unmarked by stone or headboard. There his bones lie to this day and no man knows when he is passing over them.

The six of them had left General Miles' command two days before. At dawn on the thirteenth of September they were riding northward up the long open slope: Billy Dixon and Amos Chapman, two buffalo-hunters serving as scouts, and the four troopers, Sergeant Z. T. Woodhull, privates Peter Rath, John Harrington and George W. Smith. You could hardly tell the soldiers from the plainsmen, had you seen them; a sombreroed group, booted to the knees and in their shirt-sleeves; all bore the heavy, fifty-caliber Sharps single-shot rifles across their saddle-horns.

The bare land rolled away and away, dark velvet brown toward the flushing east. The sky was vivid crimson when they turned their horses up a little knoll. They reached its summit just as the sun was rising. Here they drew rein. Two hundred Comanches and Kiowas were riding toward them at the bottom of the hill; the landscape had tricked them into ambush.

There passed an instant during which astonishment held both parties motionless: the white men on the crest, unshaven, sunburned, their soiled sombreros drooping over their narrowed eyes; and at the slope's foot the ranks of half-naked braves all decked out in the warpath's gaudy panoply; their lean torsos gleamed under the rays of the rising sun like old copper; patches of ocher and vermilion stood out in vivid contrast against the dusky skins; feathered warbonnets and dyed scalp-locks fluttered, gay bits of color in the morning breeze.

The instant passed; the white men flung themselves from their saddles; the red men deployed, forming a wide circle about them.

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An ululating yell, so fierce in its exultation that the cavalry horses pulled back upon their bridles in a frenzy of fear, broke the silence. Then the booming of the long Sharps fifties on the summit mingled with the rattle of Springfields and needle guns on the hill's flank.

Now, while the bullets threw the dust from the dry sod into their faces, five of the six dropped on their bellies in a ring. And by the sergeant's orders Private George Smith took charge of the panic-stricken horses. Perhaps that task fell to him because he was the poorest shot, perhaps it was because he had the least experience; but it was a man's job.

He stood upright clinging to the tie ropes, trying to soothe the plunging animals; and he became the target for a hundred of those rifles which were clattering along the hillside below him. For every warrior in the band knew that the first bullet that found its mark in his body would send the horses stampeding down the slope; and to put his foes afoot is the initial purpose of the plains Indian when he goes into battle.

So Private Smith clinched his teeth and did his best, while the deep-toned buffalo guns roared and the rifles of the savages answered in a never-ending volley all around him. The leaden slugs droned past his ears as thick as swarming bees; the plunging hoofs showed through the brown dust clouds and his arms ached from the strain of the tie ropes.

Billy Dixon had thrown away his wide-rimmed sombrero and his long hair rippled in the wind. He had been through the battle at Adobe Walls and men knew him for one of the best shots in the country south of the Arkansas River. He was taking it slowly, lining his sights with the coolness of an old hand on a target range. Now he raised his head and,

"Here they come," he shouted.

The circle was drawing inward where the land sloped up at the easiest angle. A hundred half-naked riders swung toward the summit and the thud-thud of the ponies' little hoofs was audible through the rattle of the rifles. The buffalo guns boomed in slow succession like the strokes of a tolling bell. Empty saddles began to show in the forefront. The charge swerved off, and as it passed at point-blank range a curtain of powder smoke unrolled along the whole flank.

Private George Smith pitched forward on his face. His rifle flew far from him. He lay there motionless. A trooper binding his wounded thigh glanced around when the assault had become a swift retreat.

"Look!" he cried. "They've got Smith."

"Set us afoot," another growled and pointed after the stampeded horses.

Smith lay quite still as he had fallen. They thought him dead. Within the hour, a dozen whooping Comanches ran their ponies up the hill toward his limp form. To gain that scalp-lock under fire would be an exploit worth telling to their grandchildren in after years. And there was the long-barreled rifle as a bit of plunder. But the five white men, who had changed their position under a second charge, emptied four saddles before the warriors were within a hundred yards of the spot and the eight survivors whipped their ponies down the slope again.

The sun was climbing high when Amos Chapman rolled over on his side and called to Billy Dixon that his leg was broken. Dixon lifted his head and surveyed the situation. The Indians were gathering for another rush. Thus far they had taken things as though they were so sure of the ultimate result that they did not see fit to take great chances. But this could not last. The next charge might be the final one. Down on a little mesquite flat some two hundred yards distant, he saw a buffalo wallow. He pointed to it.

"We got to make it," he told the others and they followed him as he ran for the shelter. But Amos Chapman crawled only a dozen paces or so before he had to give it up. The four fell to work with their butcher-knives heaping up the sand at the summit of the low bank which surrounded the shallow circular depression. They dropped their knives and picked up their rifles for the savages were sweeping down upon them.

So they dug and fought and fought and dug for another hour and then Billy Dixon was unable to stand the sight of his partner lying helpless on the summit of the knoll.

"I'm going to get Amos," he announced, and set forth amid a rain of bullets.

Those who saw him after the fight was over—and General Miles was among them—said that his shirt was ripped in twenty places by flying lead. He halted on the hilltop and took up Chapman pick-a-back, then bore him slowly down the slope to the little shelter.

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Noon came on. The sun shone hot. Dixon had gotten a bullet in the calf of his leg when he was bearing his companion on his back. Private Rath was the only man who was not wounded. They all thirsted as only men can thirst who have been keyed up to the high tide of endeavor for hours.

The savages charged thrice more; and when they came, numbers of them always deployed toward the top of the knoll where Private Smith lay dying—dead his companions thought, but they were grim in their determination that the red men should never get the scalp which they coveted so sorely.

The big Sharps boomed; the saddles emptied to their booming. Private Smith wakened from one swoon only to fall into another. Sometimes he wakened to the thudding of hoofs and saw the savages sweeping toward him on their ponies.

Near midafternoon the warriors formed for a charge and it was evident from the manner of their massing that they were going to ride down on the buffalo wallow in one solid body. But while their ranks were gathering there came up one of those sudden thunderstorms for which the Staked Plains were famous. The rain fell in sheets; the lightning blazed with scarcely an intermission between flashes. And the charge was given up for the time being. The braves drew off beyond rifle shot and huddled up within their blankets.

Morris Rath seized the respite to go for ammunition. For Smith's cartridge belts were full. He came back from the knoll breathless.

"Smith's living," he cried.

"Come on," Billy Dixon bade him and the two went back to the summit.

"I can walk if you two hold me up," Private George Smith whispered.

A bullet had passed through his lungs and when he breathed the air whistled from a hole beneath his shoulder-blade. They supported him on either side and half carried him to the buffalo wallow.

The thunder shower had passed. Another was coming fast. The Indians were gathering to take advantage of the brief interval. The agony which had come from rough motion was keeping Smith from swooning now. He saw his companions preparing to stand off the assault. Amos Chapman was holding himself upright by bracing his body against the side of the wallow. Private Smith whispered to the others,

"Set me up like Chapman. They'll think there's more of us fit to shoot that way."

And they did as he had asked them.

So he held his body erect while the life was ebbing from it; and the rain came down again in sheets. The Indians fell back before the charge was well begun. It was their last attempt.

The wind rose, biting raw. The savages melted away as dusk drew down over the brown land. Some one looked at Smith. His head was sunk and he was moaning with pain. They found a willow switch and tamped a handkerchief into the wound. And then they laid him down in the rainwater which had gathered in the wallow. His blood and the blood of the others turned that water a dull red.

Sometime near midnight he died. And several days later when General Miles' troops came to rescue them, the five others buried his body. It was night time. The fires of the troopers glowed down at the foot of the slope. They made the grave with their butcher knives by pulling down the sand from the wallow's side upon the body. And then they went to the campfires of the soldiers.

THEY are passing from bleak graveyards on the alkali flats and in the northern mountains where the sage brush meets the pines—gaunt men in laced boots and faded blue overalls who traveled once too often through the desert's mirage searching for the golden ledges; big-boned hard-rock men who died in underground passages where the steel was battering the living granite; men with soft hands and cold eyes who fattened on the fruits of robbery and murder.

This swarthy black-haired one in the soft silk shirt and spotless raiment of the gambler is Cherokee Bob, who killed and plundered unchallenged throughout eastern Washington and Idaho during the early sixties, until the camp of Florence celebrated its third New Year's Eve with a ball in which respectability held sway, and he took his consort thither to mingle with the wives of others. Then he kindled a flame of resentment which his blackest murders had failed to rouse.

The next morning the entire camp turned out to drive him forth together with Bill Willoughby, his partner. The two retreated slowly, from building to building,

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facing the mob. Shotguns bellowed; rifle bullets sang about their ears and they answered with their revolvers, until death left their trigger fingers limp.

Here comes one with catlike tread, slender and with a dignity of presence which proclaims the gentleman. But when you glance at the lean immobile face, there is that in the pale eyes which checks your blood; their gray is like the gray of old ice late in the Winter-time. This is Henry Plummer. Behind him troop thirty others, bearded men and the evil of their deeds is plainly written on their features; the members of his band who slew for gold, leaving the dead to mark their trail through Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana.

In Adler Gulch their leader was elected sheriff and planned their murders for them while he held the office. Finally such men as Sam Hauser, N. P. Langford, J. X. Beidler and Colonel W. F. Saunders took their lives in their hands and organized a vigilance committee at Virginia City.

They got their evidence; and, in January, 1864, they lynched the sheriff and his thirty, whose deeds would make a long story were they worthy of a place within this chronicle. But the mining camps never produced the type of desperado who was willing to take his share of chances in a shooting affair, excepting when the cattle country was close by. The bad man who could command a measure of admiration always was a horseman.

Here pass those who died boldly in the glaring lands by the Arizona border; a multitude of sunburned men with revolvers swinging low beside their hips and in their hands the deadly Winchesters. One comes among them, rugged of frame, big featured, red from weather and the fullness of his blood. There is, in the poise of his head and in his eyes, a fierce intolerance.

This is Joe Phy. More than forty years have passed since they buried him in the little boot hill at Florence, Arizona. Today the town is as conventional as any Eastern village, but it saw a time when men lived up to the rude clean code of our American age of chivalry. During that era Joe Phy met his end with a grimness befitting a son of the Old West.

Florence was the county seat and Pete Gabriel was sheriff. He was a handsome man with his twisted mustache and Napoleon goatee, free handed with his money, widely liked. Moreover he was a wonderful shot with his rifle and deadly quick with a single action revolver. Among the gunfighters of southern Arizona none was better known than he, and Joe Phy was his deputy.

The county of Pinal extended from the glaring flats below the Gila northward beyond the Superstition Mountains, a savage land where the sun was killing hot in Summertime, where forests of giant cacti stretched for miles like the pine woods that cloaked the higher plateaus. Phy and Gabriel rode together through the country on many a bold errand; they shared their blankets and the hardships of dry camps; they fought beside each other while the bullets of wanted men snarled, ricochetting from the rocks about them.

Then politics brought a rift in their friendship and the day came when the deputy ran for office against his former chief. The campaign was made bitter by accusations. There was, men said, a court-house ring; the big companies were dodging taxes, the small ranchers were getting the worst of it. Election came and the rancor of the reformers grew hotter when the count showed that Gabriel had won.

Many openly proclaimed that the court-house crowd had juggled with the ballots and Phy was among them. When a contest was instituted and the result of the election was carried to the courts, he grew to hate Gabriel. The hatred flamed within him until he could stand it no longer and one night he hunted the town over until he found the sheriff in Keating's saloon.

"Pete," he said, "I'm going home after my six-shooter and I'm coming back to fight it out with you. Get ready while I'm gone."

And Gabriel answered quietly,

"All right, Joe. I'll be here when you come back."

The swinging doors closed behind Phy's back and the sheriff turned to the man behind the bar.

"Call 'em up," he said. "This is on me."

He ordered whisky and those who lined up beside him kept looking toward the street entrance; but he remained with his back to the swinging doors. The minutes passed; the doors flew open. Within the threshold Joe Phy halted.

"Commence," he shouted, and flung an oath after the word. "Commence!"

Pete Gabriel turned and his revolver flew

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from its holster, spitting fire. Phy's forty-five ejected a thin stream of orange flame. The voices of the weapons mingled in one loud explosion. The two men took a pace toward each other and the smoke grew thicker as they shot again in unison. They came on slowly, pulling the triggers until the room was filled with the black powder fumes.

Then Pete Gabriel stood swaying within arm's length of Joe Phy's prostrate form. And as he struggled against the mortal weakness which was creeping through his lead-riddled body, the man on the floor whispered:

"I can't get up. Get down. We'll finish it with knives."

"I guess we've both of us got enough," the sheriff muttered and staggered out through the door, to lie all night in a nearby corral and live for two years afterward with a bullet through his kidneys.

Joe Phy died hard on the saloon floor. Those in the room gathered about him and Johnny Murphy strove to lift his head that they might give him a sip of water. A year before, Murphy and two others had slain Joe Levy, a faro dealer in Tucson, and they had done it foully from behind. Since that time men had avoided him, speaking to him only when it was absolutely necessary, and his hair had turned snow-white. Joe Phy opened his eyes and recognized his would-be helper.

"Don't you dare lay a hand on me," he cried. "You murderer!"

And he struck Murphy full in the face. His hand fell limply back. The breath had departed from his body with that blow.

THE long procession is waning. Now those are coming whose headboards were erected in the early eighties. A company of swarthy black-eyed riders in the flaring trousers and steep-crowned sombreros of Mexico jog along elbow to elbow with hard-eyed horsemen from the valleys of the San Simon and the Animas. Smuggler and cow-thief, there is a story in their passing which centers about a deep gorge near the place where the boundary between New Mexico and Arizona meets the international line. That story goes a long way back.

Down in the southwestern corner of the Animas valley the Guadalupe Cañon trail approached the gorge from which it got its name. In the days when the American colonists were still contented with Great Britain's rule it was a main thoroughfare between the Pinos Altos mines and old Mexico. Long trains of pack mules laden with treasure which the Spaniards had delved from the sun-baked mountains near where Silver City now stands, traveled this route. Apaches and bandits made many an attack on them in the cañon.

The Pinos Altos mines were abandoned. The trail fell into disuse. The years passed by. The Forty-Nine rush brought new travelers of another breed who beat down the old track again. Passing through the gorge they too found the Apaches lurking among the rocks and more than one old argonaut laid down his square rifle for the last time within the shadow of those arid cliffs.

Old man Clanton came with one of these Forty-Nine outfits, a typical specimen of that lean-jawed leathern-faced breed who have fought Indians, lynched Mexicans and established themselves in hundreds of dreary outposts beyond the last settlements. He went on to California, failed to find gold and returned some time during the later seventies to the upper San Pedro Valley. Here he "raised his family," as the old expression has it, and his sons grew up, Finn, Ike and Billy.

Those were wild days and the two last-named boys became more proficient with rope, running iron and forty-five revolver than they ever did with their school books. In time they were known as rustlers and in the lawless town of Charleston by the San Pedro River they fell in with Curly Bill. When the outlaw went eastward into the valleys of the San Simon and the Animas, the two young Clantons went with him.

The cow-thieves of the San Simon and the Animas did not go to the trouble of altering brands or "sleepering" as their successors have in later years but drove off entire herds and sold them, as they were, to shippers. Occasionally they rode down into Sonora to raid the ranges south of the border.

One July day in 1881 a number of them embarked on such an expedition and they gathered a bunch of several hundred longhorns. They brought them up through Guadalupe Cañon and came on northward to the Double Dobe ranch. Here they left the cattle with a man to hold them, while they rode over to Curly Bill's place, not far distant.

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But the Mexicans had been suffering from this sort of depredation until patience had ceased to be a virtue and a band of thirty dusky vaqueros were following the trail of those stolen longhorns. On the afternoon of July 26th the man who was riding herd caught sight of the steep-crowned sombreros coming out through the mirage on the flats to the south. He waited only long enough to satisfy himself as to the nationality of the riders, then clapped spurs to his pony and raced to Curly Bill's place.

It took the rustlers some time to saddle up. When they arrived at the Double Dobe they found nothing of their former prizes but a fresh trail. They made the best speed they could, but the Mexicans were "shoving those cattle hard," as the old-timers say. They had a good lead and they held it clear to Guadalupe Cañon. The running fight that followed lasted half-way through the gorge. The men from Sonora were seasoned hands at Indian warfare and they had no mind to give up their beef.

They left a small rearguard, who fell back slowly from rock to rock while their companions urged the longhorns to a run. The shouts of "Toro! Toro! Mula! Mula!" mingled with the crackling of the rifles. And when the rustlers finally routed the stubborn defenders to chase the herders on through the ravine and reassemble the panic-stricken stock, they took back three dead men across their saddles. They buried the bodies at the Cloverdale ranch and so started a lonely little boot hill whose headboards showed on the edge of the mesa for many years.

There came now to the old Guadalupe Cañon trail a new traffic. Mexican smugglers who had formerly been crossing the boundary at the southern end of the San Pedro Valley, shifted their route hither and traveled northward to Sliver City. They were hard men, accustomed to warring with Apaches, bandits and border officers. They banded together in formidable outfits to guard the dobe dollars which loaded down the aparejos during the northern journey.

Curly Bill's companions saw them passing on more than one occasion—a scuffle of hoofs, a haze of dust, through which showed the swarthy faces of the outriders under the great sombreros—and, what lingered longest in the memories of these hard-faced men of the Animas, the pleasant dull chink of those dobe dollars in the rawhide pack-sacks.

In Galeyville the rustlers talked the matter over. It was a simple problem: Go and get the money. They went one day and made their camp near Guadalupe Cañon. They sent scouts on through the gorge to watch the country from the mesa above the spot where John Slaughter's ranch buildings now stand. One hot noontide the scouts came riding in.

"There's a big outfit coming. Must be a dozen mules and nigh on to thirty men."

The outlaws were in the saddle before the men who brought the tidings had time to breathe their horses.

In those days you were supposed to give a man what the old-timers called an even break before you killed him. The supposition was lived up to by the chivalrous and ignored by many who gained large reputations. But, when it came to Mexicans there was not even that ideal to attain; they were not rated as full-fledged human beings; to slay one meant no addition to the notches on one's gun; nor did one feel obliged to observe the rules of fair play. You simply killed your greaser in the most expeditious manner possible and then forgot about it.

The rustlers went about the business according to this custom. Save for Curly Bill the members of the party left their horses in charge of a man around a turn of the gorge. They hid themselves behind the rocks on the steep mountainside and waited while their burly leader rode slowly to meet the smugglers.

The train was traveling after the Mexican fashion, which is very much like the Spanish California manner of driving a herd. The chief of the outfit rode in the lead some distance before the first pack mule. The laden animals followed in single file. Flanking them on either side were the armed guards, with one or two closing in on the rear.

Thus they came, winding their way among the stark rocks and the clumps of Spanish bayonet, and when the leader caught sight of Curly Bill from under his huge, silver-decked sombrero, he reined in his horse; his grip tightened on the rifle which he carried across his saddle. The outriders pulled up; there was a low rattle of shifting weapons and the bell of the first mule stopped tinkling as the train came to a stand.

But the strange rider was alone. The leader raised his arm in signal and the

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straggling procession resumed its advance. The solitary American rode on until he was alongside their head man.

"*Buenos dios, señor,*" he said and checked his pony.

The Mexican answered. The pair shook hands. When they had talked for some moments, Curly Bill turned and rode back up the cañon beside the smuggler. The pack train followed and the men on the flanks eased their rifles back into the sheaths. They traveled until the head mule had passed the last hidden rustler.

Curly Bill's right hand swept to his revolver holster and came on upward clutching the weapon's butt. The movement was so quick that before those who were looking at him really grasped its meaning the hot rocks were bandying echoes of the report. The Mexican was sliding from his saddle, quite dead. The outlaw was spurring his pony up the mountainside.

Now the outriders dragged their rifles from the sheaths, but while they were seeking to line their sights on the murderer the rustlers opened fire on them. Those cow-thieves of the Animas were good shots; the range was short.

The flat explosions of the Winchesters, the scuffling of hoofs, the voices of dark-skinned riders calling upon their saints as they pitched forward from their frenzied horses, dying; the squealing of a hit burro; these things the arid cliffs heard and repeated to one another. And then the rat-tat-tat of hoofbeats as the surviving smugglers fled westward.

That is the way the rustlers told the story in Galeyville amid grim laughter; and the voices of the narrators were raised to carry above the staccato pounding of the pianos, the scuffling of booted heels on the dance-hall floors, the shrill mirthless outcries of rouge-bedizened women, and the resonant slapping of dobe dollars on the unpainted pine bars.

Now and again the recitals were interrupted by the roaring of .45 revolvers as the more fervid celebrants showed their expertness at marksmanship by shooting the French heels from the shoes of the dance-hall girls.

John Ringold, the king of the outlaws, got wind of what was going on and rode over from Tombstone, silent as usual, and with that saturninity of expression which grew darker as the whisky began to work within him. He took no part in the celebration but sat through one day and two blazing nights, dumbly sardonic, at a round table.

Save for his dark countenance, the faces which ringed that table were changing constantly. Men came noisily, sat down for a time and departed at length in chastened silence as the poker game which he had organized went on and on—until a large share of those dobe dollars passed unto him. Then, with the sudden flare of recklessness which invariably came to him sooner or later, he in his turn flung away the silver over the unpainted bars. So the incident passed and was forgotten—by the rustlers.

The Mexicans did not forget.

Old Man Clanton started with a Tombstone butcher and three others on a journey for the Animas valley a few weeks later. They were going to buy beef cattle and they took the Guadalupe Cañon route. One night they made camp near the middle of the gorge. And while they slept a dozen swarthy men who wore the steep-crowned sombreros and the trousers with leathern facings which were a part of every Mexican smuggler's costume, came creeping in and out among the boulders like the Apaches whose ways they had studied in years of border warfare.

They had waited a long time in the lofty mountains south of the boundary, watching the malapi flats for a party of Americans; and at last these had come. They had dogged their trail through the long hot afternoon, keeping well back lest they should be discovered. Now they were closing in. The air grew cooler and the hour of dawn approached. They slipped, black shadows a little deeper than the night which enfolded them.

The light climbed up the eastern sky and leaked down between the cliffs, the cold gray dusk which comes before the dawn. The shadows melted slowly; the heavens began to blush. Down here a man could line the notch of his hindsight with the bead. A pebble tinkled in the arid watercourse. One of the sleepers stirred in his blankets. He caught the sound, opened his eyes and saw the crown of a sombrero rising behind a rock. He leaped from his bed and flung himself among a clump of boulders just as the rifles began to talk.

Two or three cowboys were lounging about the Cloverdale ranch-house on a blazing Summer afternoon when a queer

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figure came into sight upon the palpitating plain. The spectacle of a man on foot was so uncommon in those days that they had a hard time making themselves believe that this form, which at times took distorted shapes in the wavering overheated air, was that of a human being. Then they set forth to meet him, and they brought the one survivor of the Clanton party to the ranch-house. His bare feet were bleeding; he was half clad; and his tongue was swollen from thirst. They got his story and they rode to Guadalupe Cañon where they found the bodies of his companions. They buried them on the little boot hill overlooking the ranch buildings.

But the episode was not yet finished.

Time went by. Billy Clanton and the two MacLowery boys, who are said to have been parties to the dobe dollar holdup, died one Autumn morning fighting it out against the Earp faction in Tombstone's street. Curly Bill's fate remains something of a mystery, but one story has it that Wyatt Earp killed him near Globe two years or so later. John Ringold killed himself up in the San Simon, delirious from thirst. Rattlesnake Bill, who helped to spend the Mexican silver, was shot down by a fellow rustler in Galeyville. Jake Gauz, another of the participants, was lynched for horse-stealing not far from the head of Turkey Creek cañon.

So they went one after the other and it is possible that every man who was present at the massacre of the Mexicans died with his boots on.

"'All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword'."

The words come from one who rides near the grim procession's end; a slim young fellow, beardless, and his hair hangs to his shoulders. It is the boy whom men called Billy the Kid. He quoted the passage to Pat Garret when the Lincoln county sheriff and his posse were taking him and his captured companions to Santa Fé.

"'All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword'."

Only a few nights before he spoke, Tom O'Phalliard, one of the last of his band, had fallen from his horse with a bullet through his chest in Fort Sumner to die, cursing the tall silent sheriff, in the room where the posse had carried him. Two mornings afterward at the Arroyo Tivan, Charley Bowdre had staggered into the stone house where the outlaws were hiding, wounded unto death by the rifles of these same pursuers.

"Charlie, you're done for. Go out and see if you can't get one of them," Billy the Kid had told the dying man, and through the crack of the door had watched him stumbling over the frozen snow toward the posse, while his numbed fingers fumbled with his revolver butt in a final access of vain effort.

And now this youth, the deadliest of the Southwestern outlaws, spoke from the Scriptures to Pat Garret; perhaps it was all of his Bible that he knew. He said it in December. In July Garret shot him in Pete Maxwell's room at Fort Sumner. The years went by. One day the former sheriff fell in the sand hills west of Tularosa with an assassin's bullet in his back.

THUS, throughout the Old West, bad-man and frontier officer, Indian fighter, cowboy, stage driver, trooper and faro dealer, they lived their lives in accordance with bold customs which bridged the gap between savagery and modern civilization. In a strange land they did the best they could; and, bad or good, they came to their ends with a fine unflinching disregard for the supreme adventure.

Today fat prairie cornfields stand tasseled in the sunlight, the smoke of lusty young cities rises black against the sky; while automobiles speed upon concrete highways over the forgotten graveyards where their bones lie.

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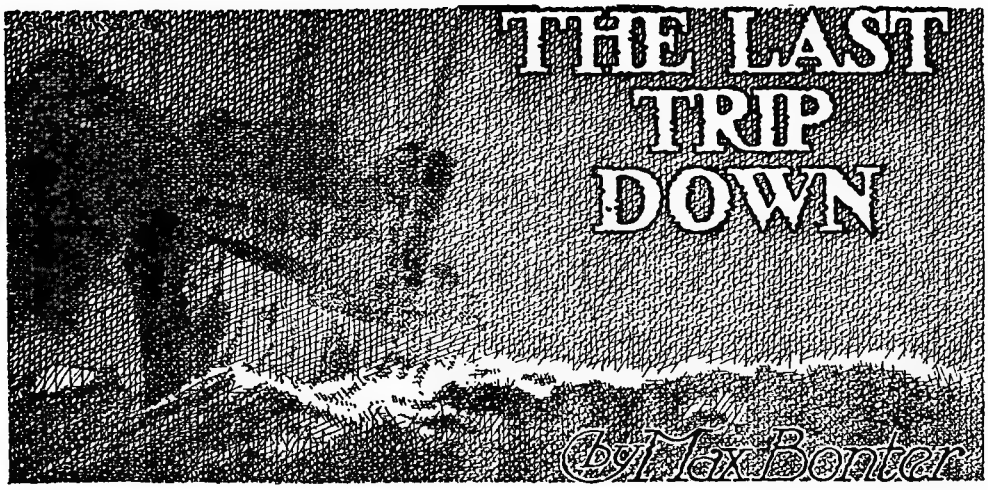

Author of "The Life of Riley," "The Red Vest," etc.

THE captain of the *L. S. Cunningham* was a God-fearing man and he thanked the Providence that had brought him and his ship through another season in safety. It was December 15th and on that day official navigation on the Great Lakes closed down until the following Spring.

The coast-guard authorities would begin taking the lights from the channels. Insurance underwriters would no longer accept risks on cargoes. While the weather was still exceptionally mild, nevertheless the long-delayed Winter might be expected at any moment to rush down with a savage slap from the head of the lakes and make navigation perilous in the extreme.

The big freighter slid easily over the smooth surface of Lake Erie and at last the skipper's discerning eye made out the Buffalo breakwater a couple of points off his starboard bow. Behind it a line of ships lay snugly marshaled with their bows toward the breakwater and the prospective Wintry blasts. They were anchored in their Winter quarters with the precision of a column of soldiers on parade. The captain was anxious to add his ship to the long line and then go home to the bosom of his family.

The *L. S. Cunningham* nosed her way carefully into the difficult harbor and up Buffalo Creek, where she stopped finally alongside the Buffalo Furnace, for which she carried ore. The steam winches rattled briskly; the ship's thirty hatches were uncovered; presently a couple of big buckets were racing back and forth on their runways between ship and shore, plunging deep into the cavernous hold and making swift transfer of ton after ton of the heavy red dirt to the dump near by.

The skipper called his crew forward and paid them their trip's wages and then went ashore in a happy frame of mind to telephone for his tying-up instructions. It was therefore with much consternation that he heard the crisp message sent by the owner from the other end of the wire.

"You'll have to make another trip, cap'n. Load coal at the P. & R. for Superior and bring back another twelve thousand for the Buffalo Furnace. The weather is holding fine. We'll take a chance on one more trip."

"*We'll* take a chance, eh?" was the skipper's grim thought. "*You'll* risk a little money—that's all."

Aloud, he replied doubtfully—

"Most of my crew are leaving, Mr. Cunningham, and it's hard to pick up a crew after the fifteenth on account of the risk."

"Lots of boats tied up," the owner parried testily. "You should have no trouble in picking up men. Moreover, there won't be anybody loading ahead of you. You can shoot up there and be back by Christmas."

The skipper sighed in acquiescence and went back aboard ship.

"One more trip, boys," he said cheerily like a dutiful soldier. "I guess we can make it before the bad weather sets in."

"*The Last Trip Down*," copyright, 1922, by *Max Bonter*.

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Half the crew expressed their willingness to stick, but the others firmly declined to accept the hazard and went their way. By the time the *L. S. Cunningham* had discharged her ore and taken on her coal nearly all the vacancies had been filled; and when the last ton of anthracite plumped down into the vessel's hold at eight o'clock on the night of the eighteenth, the captain was but one man short of his regulation crew.

"We're ready to leave, Mr. Cunningham, but the chief engineer tells me that his fire-room crew is still one coal-passer short," telephoned the captain to the owner.

"What! Held up on account of one man when every minute counts? Wait—I think there's a man here who would fill the bill. Doesn't require any particular brains for that job, does it?"

"No—only shoveling coal."

"All right. I'll send the man down right away."

Half an hour later the coal-passer came aboard. The *L. S. Cunningham's* lines were cast off and she set her nose resolutely toward the impending menace of the North.

"What's your name?" asked the second engineer of the new coal-passer.

"Stevens."

"Ever sail before?"

"No— This is my first trip."

"What's your first name? I need it for the pay-roll."

"Lem."

"All right, Stevens. You look husky enough for the job, anyway. Put on your overalls and come below. I'll put you wise to the work."

A BENEFICENT fate seemed to hold the *L. S. Cunningham* in her charge. The shallow treachery of Lake Erie was masked by an unruffled bosom. A keen north wind met them on Lake Huron, but the sky was clear and the broad horizon revealed no lurking portent of a coming storm. The ship negotiated the big lock at the Soo, rounded the sheltering arm of Whitefish Point and at last steamed boldly out upon Lake Superior. The sky continued clear and as the ship swung into the last lap of her upward journey the hearts of the skipper and his crew were glad.

Stevens, the new coal-passer, however, had been meeting with difficulties below.

"Why, the guy can't even shovel coal," commented the firemen disgustedly to the second engineer.

"Well, it's the last trip, boys," replied the second consolingly. "What can you expect from a green hand? You were green yourselves once, weren't you?"

Stevens was a quiet fellow who spoke little and minded his own business. He did his best with the shovel and bore the complaints of the firemen with fortitude. His hands were covered with blisters, but nevertheless he stuck it out to the end of each watch with dogged persistence. After the watch was over he would crawl dismally away to his bunk.

THE *L. S. Cunningham* docked at Superior on the morning of the twenty-second of December and began at once to discharge her coal. Two days in port were little short of Paradise for the unfortunate coal-passer. He spent the time nursing his blistered hands and interestedly watching the proceedings on deck.

After the coal had been unloaded the big freighter steamed slowly over to the great new ore dock at Aloise, where twelve thousand tons of ore awaited her. There was not a minute's delay. She was the only ship to be cargoed and a long train-load of the red dirt, properly thawed and in condition for swift transfer, stood in readiness on the high pier.

Then followed an almost incredible thing. Ore chutes were lowered over the *L. S. Cunningham's* thirty hatches and in forty minutes the entire twelve thousand tons of ore had thundered down into the vessel's hold!

"A record!" cried the captain. "A cargo in forty minutes! There's a storm warning out, though. I want to get off this lake before it strikes us."

The steam winches were got to work pulling over the hatch covers and the *L. S. Cunningham* was already steaming out of the harbor before the deck hands had finished battening them down.

"So that's what they call ore, eh?" asked Stevens the coal-passer of a fireman standing by. "Why don't they fill the ship full?"

"Why, ya boob," replied the stoker, "don't ya see that ore's twice as heavy as coal? It's nearly all iron."

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"Why don't they smooth it over flat? Won't those little hills fall over to one side if the ship rolls?"

Stevens was referring to the little "peaks" of ore that had been left under the hatches just as it had fallen from the chutes.

"Now ya're talkin', Jack. The skipper figures it'll take up too much time. He wants to git offa this lake before the blow comes."

"And if the blow hits us with the ore stacked up in the middle like that, it will be dangerous, won't it?" persisted the knowledge-seeking coal-passer.

"That's what we're gittin' paid fer, 'bo—takin' a chance. It takes time to trim that ore over, an' time means old Cunnin'ham's money—see? What's a few guys more or less to that old bird? He don't have to take the chance."

Stevens was reflective that night when he went on watch to shovel coal. Over on the northern horizon he had seen great patches of black cloud forming as though in readiness for battle. The temperature dropped fast and the air was bitterly cold. The fast-frothing waves gave promise of a coming "sea."

"We're goin' to have a little 'roll,' boys," said the second engineer with a grin. "Blast it! I always get sick."

The skipper began to fear that he had miscalculated the arrival of the storm. He watched the grim Apostle Islands slide by on the starboard side and cast an apprehensive eye on the black wrack that was bearing down on the port.

"I guess we can make Whitefish before it gets too bad," said the captain to the mate. They were both on watch in the pilot house.

"Here it comes now," replied the mate.

It was midnight when the snow-storm struck the *L. S. Cunningham*. Billions of the little white messengers came hurtling down from the North, propelled by a sixty-mile gale. Stevens, the coal-passer, climbed up from the fire-hold and made his way to his quarters. The ship was rolling and he felt queer.

"Sick, sonny?" grinned a fireman. "Aw, don't mind a little thing like this. It's only the beginnin'."

"Don't scare the poor guy to deat'," admonished another. "We need him to shovel a little more coal."

The landsman fell into a fitful doze, but toward morning he awoke and became conscious of the fact that the ship was laboring in the midst of considerable commotion. At one moment his head seemed to be sinking into an abyss, but at the next he felt as if he were standing on his feet. A constant pounding along the steel sides of the vessel produced hollow reverberations similar to those of a big drum.

He climbed giddily out of the bunk and made his way aft to the engine-room. Members of the crew were scurrying about, swishing through ankle-deep water, battening down ports and dead lights. Icy water squeezed through all available interstices.

The bos'n stumbled down the companion way shouting gruffly—

"Captain's orders are, all hands off duty into the hold to trim ore!"

The bos'n's oilskins were sheathed with ice and the strain of a trying vigil showed in his haggard eyes.

The storm was striking the *L. S. Cunningham* on her port beam. Snow had ceased falling, but the weather had become bitterly cold and hard fresh water ice like granite was collecting fast along her windward side. This glittering armor was being gradually thickened by the constant wash of the waves, and under the fast-accumulating weight the ship perceptibly listed. The ore peaks in the hold heightened the menace. As the ship gradually listed they settled slowly, inexorably, toward the low side. It was only a matter of hours when the combined weight of the ice and the settling ore would pull the big freighter over so far that she would turn turtle.

"Six hours to Whitefish and I'm afraid we can't make it," said the bos'n wearily to the second engineer. "We've had steam on the ice, but there's too much of a sea running. We're nearly froze stiff and the men would sooner take a chance trimmin' ore than be washed overboard. Can't the chief put more ballast in the tanks on the starboard side?"

"The chief says he's got too much water in 'em already," replied the second. "She's too low as it is. He's in charge in the engine room, so the best I can do is put an auxiliary gang in the hold with the deck hands."

The second quickly mustered an emergency crew from the fire-room force and they proceeded into the hold to aid the toiling deck hands.

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"Now you guys have got to shovel for your lives!" he bellowed, "if you ever want to see port again."

The second set an example by seizing a shovel and starting in to trim the ore to the high side of the ship. Worn out as they were from the trying labors of the preceding watch, the oilers and firemen and coal-passers nevertheless bent grimly to the task. It was a last desperate effort to defeat the grisly Fate that beckoned to them. The nearest anchorage lay six hours' travel distant over a furious, freezing sea and the ship was listing fast.

"Can't they use the lifeboats?" ventured Stevens the coal-passer, pausing to gain breath.

"Shovel ore!" growled a fireman. "If ya could launch a boat in this sea, ya'd freeze in half an hour with ice water washin' over ya; wouldn't ya, ya simp?"

"It's the last trip down, bo," said an oiler with a ghastly grin. "Yours an' mine an' ev'rybody else's aboard. All Cunnin'ham loses is some dough."

"Blast 'im!" yelled a fireman savagely, "if he was here so he c'd go to —— wit' us, I wouldn't give a ——!"

STEVENS' face was white. He was sick, his hands were raw from blisters and he could scarcely lift half a shovel full of the heavy ore.

"Say!" he called suddenly to the second engineer. "This stuff is nearly all iron. Wouldn't a magnet pull it over to the other side?"

There was a cackle of unearthly laughter from all hands.

"The bloke is always askin' some fool question—why in——don't he work?"

"A big magnet," pursued the coal-passer calmly, "like they use in steel plants? It could swing over a ton at a time."

"Where's the magnet?" asked the second sarcastically. "Do you carry one around in your pocket?"

"Have you plenty of copper wire," went on Stevens quietly, ignoring the engineer's sarcasm, "and some long bolts and a piece of timber? I know something about electricity. I can make an electric magnet and operate it by the ship's dynamo."

The second stared at the coal-passer for a moment.

"Son, you're either crazy or you've got the best head aboard ship," he said at last. "There's two hundred pounds of wire in the dunnage room, consigned to Buffalo by the mine owners—left over from their wiring job. As for the rest of the stuff—the ship's carpenter has probably got that."

The bos'n came up to the second, shaking his head.

"We're going to lose out," he muttered. "I don't think she'll last more than an hour or two unless we can get some of this cargo over."

"There's a 'Steve Brodie' chance—" the second began. "Son," he continued, addressing the coal-passer, "come with me to the chief. We'll see what he says."

The coal-passer's scheme was adopted as a forlorn hope. Under Stevens' direction the ship's carpenter bored thirty holes, six inches apart, through a fifteen-foot, six-by-six oak timber. Stevens wound half a dozen layers of copper wire around an eighteen-inch bolt, beginning at the head and wiring it twelve inches toward the nut—placing a layer of paper between each two layers of wire and leaving the two ends of wire free.

"I want twenty-nine more of those bolts wound like that," he directed, and all fireroom hands off watch were put immediately to work on the job. In the meantime the coal-passer had made wire connections with the ship's dynamo and after the thirty bolts were wound as desired he connected the ends of the wires on each bolt with the wires from the dynamo. The bolts he then secured through the timber with nuts.

"I've put a switch in this coil, thirty feet from the magnet, which will allow it sufficient play," he explained to the second. "When I switch on the electro-magnetic current each of those bolts will be a magnet. When I turn it off, each bolt will be demagnetized. Naturally, I'll switch it on when it swings toward the side that's too low. As it swings back the other way I'll turn off the current and the load will drop. That will gradually transfer the ore from the low side to the high side, with the rolling of the ship."

"I begin to see what you're driving at," said the engineer.

The big magnet was carried into the after hold and rigged beneath a hatch by means of ship's hawsers reeved through the "I" clamp rings beneath the hatch frames. The instrument hung suspended about ten inches above the ore—parallel with it.

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"Here's for a test," said the coal-passer. "Swing it over the low side."

The men pushed the magnet sharply to port—the side on which she was listed. Stevens switched on the current.

At once the ship's lights went out, as all the dynamo's power was transferred to the magnet.

"Never mind," said Stevens reassuringly. "The lights will come back in a minute—as soon as the ore is dumped."

A mass of ore flew up and clustered about the instrument which, in obedience to the roll of the ship, swung quickly back to starboard carrying the load of ore with it. Stevens then turned off the switch and the load dropped. The ship's lights burned brightly again.

"Hooray!" cried all hands.

Back and forth they worked the magnet like a pendulum and every time it swung to the starboard side it carried half a ton of the weight that was pulling them down.

The men worked the magnet gradually toward the forward part of the ship, trimming the ore as they went; and at last, when the ray of the great Fish Light brought cheer to the skipper's heart his ship was riding on an even keel.

"Coal-passer," said the engineer putting out his hand, "I don't know why you're shoveling coal for a living—but you've certainly saved the ship!"

The skipper dropped her hooks behind Whitefish Point, steamed the ice from her decks and straightened up her cargo. At the Soo he received two telegrams from the owner inquiring about the trip.

"First time I ever knew the old boy to get worried," said the captain to himself with a smile. "Well, he was risking a lot on this last trip down."

Clearing weather marked the rest of the run to Buffalo; and when the vessel made her berth alongside the ore dock the first man aboard was the owner. He went immediately into the captain's quarters and was closeted with the skipper for half an hour. Then he and the captain went below to the fire-hold. The owner's stern face was wreathed in smiles.

"First time I ever saw 'L. S.' smile," mused the second wonderingly.

Cunningham walked immediately over and shook hands with one of the coal-passers.

"Lem," he chuckled, "I guess you must have learned something in college after all."

"Who's that guy?" inquired an inquisitive fireman in a whisper.

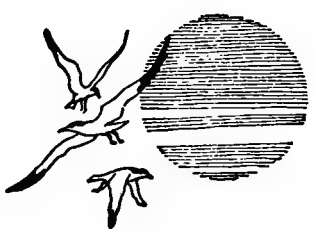
"That's Mr. L. S. Cunningham, the owner of the ship."

"An' he's chewin' the rag wit' the coal-passer?"

"That 'coal-passer,' " returned the second with a grin, "is Lemuel Stevens Cunningham, Junior—the skipper just told me."

"I roasted his old man to his face—somethin' awful," whispered the embarassed coal heaver. "But why was he passin' coal?"

"I understand his dad was sore at him—claimed he didn't have any brains."



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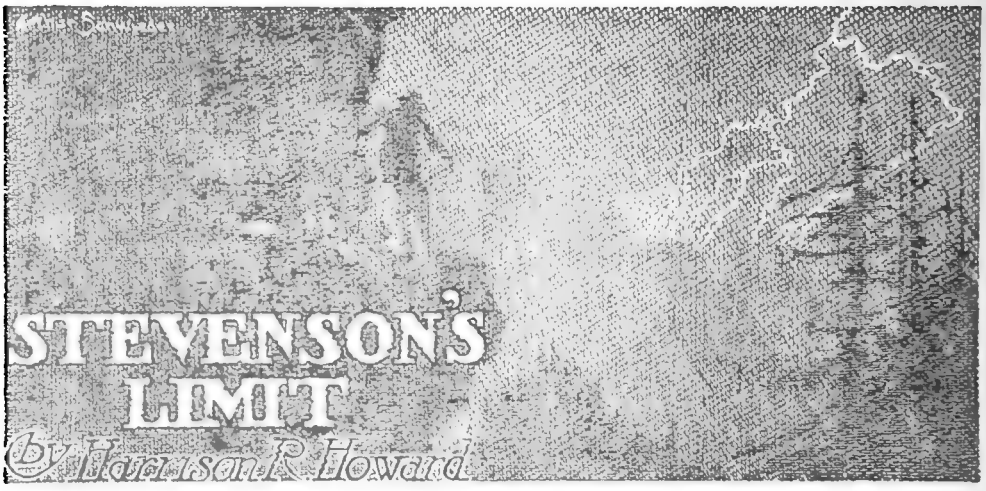

Author of "The Old Order" "The Best Bet," etc.

RANGER STEVENSON'S record in the Forest Service was one of frequent and unexplained transfers. Many forest districts in the northwestern woods had known him briefly, yet none understood or even suspected the cause of his inevitable removal; and it remained for Whiptown, in the River Whip country, to witness his public undoing and name him "Limited" Stevenson.

Stevenson was intensely conscious of his limitations and, no matter what the issue, stoutly refused to attempt going beyond them. It was his wont to pause upon the threshold of adventure and measure the distance to which his abilities would carry him against the circumstances; and, having fixed his limit, he would go just that far and no farther.

He had seen many men go to death for disregarding their limitations. These, to be sure, had been splendid fellows who, flinging aside caution and reason, had rashly accepted destiny in raging flood or forest fire. By such spectacles Stevenson had been thrilled yet offended; for it was written in his book that the victory of life was to live; and he never projected himself beyond the reasonable limit of his powers to endure.

It was in the Black Creek district that Stevenson's limitations earned him his first transfer. In command of an impressed crew of foreign homesteaders he was driving a fire-trail across the path of a lusty forest fire sweeping down a cañon of second-growth fir, glutted with underbrush. A second crew under Stevenson's superior was cutting trail from the opposite direction; and the task was to make the two trails meet before the fire, threatening the crown, reached the barrier.

Upon the breast of a high wind the conflagration thundered down the cañon, racing madly through the underbrush. The deafening pandemonium, the glow of the devil's own pit that painted the forest world a dripping crimson, increased with each passing moment. The heat was terrific; men were overcome, falling to the trail-side to be drenched with water by those who maintained the bucket line to the near-by creek.

Through an interpreter, Stevenson drove the fire-fighters to superhuman effort; but not for a moment in the intensity of the engagement was he forgetful of his established limitations.

"We can stand this about thirty minutes longer!" he shouted to the interpreter above the din of the screeching flames. "That's our limit!"

Precisely in thirty minutes Stevenson mustered his crew, picked up those that lay at the trail-side, and marched out. Some time later the flames swept over, though the other crew fought valiantly to best them. The red menace roared on down the cañon and would have destroyed a valuable stand of virgin timber had not a sudden change of wind driven the flames back upon the burned-over area.

An investigation by local Service officials had inquired into the causes of Stevenson's

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retreat. There was no publicity; the implied charge against the ranger was scarcely susceptible of precise judgment. Stevenson testified with gusto, not as a man justifying himself but as one justifying a principle. His men were falling under the strain; their rear was in danger, and they stood likely to be cut off; in short, instead of reaching their objective they had reached their limit. Something akin to pity Stevenson recognized in the expression of his inquisitors. There were no comments. Two weeks later his first transfer came.

That was the beginning of Stevenson's itinerant career during which he maintained himself scrupulously within his limitations. He was not yellow; against odds which did not offend his sense of proportion his sand assayed well up with the best of them. There had been the Brundage incident at Pinehurst. Big Brundage was the uncalled bully of the district and he had crossed Ranger Stevenson on the very day of the latter's arrival.

Brundage possessed an imposing physique and had many friends in the bar-room. Stevenson calmly estimated the other's weight, his possible speed, and the silent support of the assemblage. From this he subtracted his own limitations and as there appeared to be a reasonable remainder, he removed his leather vest and revolver belt. In fifteen minutes Big Brundage was on his knees, his features beaten out of ready recognition, panting out his supplication that Stevenson let up.

The crowd in the bar-room, shifting its support as victory shifted, was now wildly urging the ranger to disregard the fallen bully and finish him once for all. But Stevenson lifted Brundage to his feet, assisted him to the bar, and bought him a drink. The spectacle of the fallen bully elicited his profound sympathy. Brundage had attempted to exceed his abilities and his present disgusting state was a characteristic result of disregarding limitations.

It was scarcely a month later that a circumstance arose in which Stevenson's limits fell short of the goal. As usual his sin was that of omission instead of commission and therefore difficult definitely to place. Had his failing been less subtile he would have been drummed out of the service; but in the absence of precise evidence another transfer resulted.

When Stevenson reported for duty at Whiptown, a mile inland from where Whip River joins the sea, he had been in the service four years, had sustained repeated transfers with philosophic faith in his convictions, and was no farther along the road to promotion than the day he enlisted. None of his transfers had been attended by public scandal, and his belief in the doctrine of limitations was still serenely unshaken.

He had been six months in the village of Whiptown, assistant to District Ranger Randolph, when his Nemesis finally overtook him. This time there was no covering up his insufficiency, no closet investigation and quiet transfer. Many of Whiptown's citizens witnessed the affair and Stevenson was tried in the court of public opinion and being adjudged, was named "Limited" Stevenson.

An incendiary had set a series of fires on the reserve and District Ranger Randolph with his assistant, Ranger Stevenson, impressed a hundred fire-fighters and had the conflagration under control when word came that the fire-bug had been seen on the Floraville trail, and that the sheriff's posse had left town in pursuit.

Now between the Service and the sheriff's office there existed a lively and none too friendly spirit of competition. The district man, upon receiving the message, summoned Stevenson at once from the fire line.

"We can't afford to have the sheriff get our man, Stevenson! Take six of your crew and cut across country to the Floraville trail. You can head them off and make the arrest."

That was noon. With six weary fire-fighters who had not slept and scarcely eaten in thirty hours, Stevenson rode at top speed along the twisting forest trails. It was with an effort that he kept awake in the saddle; and as the sun began to approach the horizon he realized that he was getting perilously near to his limitations.

They reached the Floraville trail and thundered on. They did not find any one nor sign of any one.

"There's a limit to everything," Stevenson exclaimed in exasperation to the sleepy-eyed man riding beside him. "We'll go as far as the main cross-trails and call that enough!"

They galloped their animals on to the cross-trails, reaching the intersection within half an hour of sunset. Stevenson drew up.

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"Guess we've lost him, boys. No sign of him hereabouts. This is far enough."

One of the riders protested sleepily.

"Hadn't we better go on till sundown, ranger? He might be just beyond."

Stevenson shrugged generously.

"Go ahead if you want to, Jones. For me, I'm returning. I know my limitations. We've got the trip back to town ahead of us yet."

Stevenson and his six men reached Whiptown by dawn and across the breakfast table in the restaurant Stevenson made his report to Randolph.

"Too bad, Stevenson," the district man commented, "that you couldn't have kept on till dark."

Stevenson returned his scrutiny steadily.

"Jones, here, suggested that, but I couldn't see it. As we'd been in the saddle six hours after thirty on the fire-lines, I figured that was a fair limit and I never go beyond my limits!"

At that instant the restaurant doors were flung open and the sheriff, followed by his posse, strode into the room. Carried between two of them was a man bound hand and foot.

"Here's your fire-bug, Randolph," the sheriff announced glancing with a broad grin from the district man to ranger Stevenson. "Thought we'd do you a favor and pick him up for you!"

The district man flashed a glance at Stevenson then rose and faced the sheriff.

"Where and when did you pick him up, sheriff?"

"Just a half a mile past the main cross-trails last night at sunset. What caused your men to turn back? We saw the marks of them as we passed."

The restaurant was rapidly filling with Whiptown's citizens and after a moment's consideration Randolph replied reluctantly—

"The boys were tired and Ranger Stevenson put the cross-trails as the limit."

"Too bad he didn't put the limit half a mile beyond!" the officer replied with a laugh. "But anyway, we were glad to do it for you."

The district man smiled blandly.

"I don't doubt that, Dan. Thanks!"

It was evening when Stevenson was roused from his bunk by the district man's summons.

"I want to play fair with you, Stevenson," Randolph said when the ranger reported. "I'll lay my cards face up on the table. Of course you realize that after what happened you can't stay on my district. You're the talk of the town. They're calling you 'Limited' Stevenson!"

"That's old woman's talk!" Stevenson replied irritably. "Do you think I care a fig what a pack of fools think about me? What is it *you* want, anyway?"

Randolph was momentarily taken aback. He had expected to encounter a chastened Stevenson. After a moment he replied evenly:

"As I said, ranger, I want to play fair with you. Would you like to put in an application for transfer instead of having me recommend it?"

The ranger laughed defiantly and an unmistakable menace flashed in his eyes. The district man, as a physical opponent, was well within Stevenson's limits.

"Is that supposed to be funny, Randolph? Do you think I'm ashamed of having sense enough to recognize my limitations? You're a —— fool; and so far as the transfer is concerned you can use your own judgment and go to ——!"

Hearing him through, Randolph leaned across the table, his eyes narrowed, the muscles of his jaw twitching. Then abruptly he relaxed and smiled.

"You've got guts, Stevenson, along with the strength of your convictions. Some day you'll forget your limits, and then you're going to raise —— in this man's Service!"

Stevenson slammed the door behind him and on the boarded sidewalk encountered the sheriff.

"Good evening, Limited," the officer greeted him.

Stevenson laughed with ill-tuned heartiness and strode off to his quarters. A few weeks later his transfer came.

RANGER STEVENSON listened disconsolately to the shrill pæan of the storm which, having maintained throughout the day, was sweeping to cyclonic proportions with the fall of darkness. The mad elements hurled from out the black void smote the exposed face of Bald Mountain where Stevenson's tiny lookout shack trembled and cowered beneath each terrific impact.

He went to the broad windows and peered

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outside, but the smother of storm restricted his vision to a radius scarcely greater than the reach of a man's arm. On clear nights it was possible to see the distant lights of Whiptown on the coast; for his transfer had carried him just over the boundary of the next district, and although he was under the directions of another district ranger, yet it was to Randolph's office in Whiptown that he made his fire reports when he discovered smoke above the timber fields below.

To Stevenson it was not a happy situation. He had hoped for a transfer to some distant post where the tale of his undoing had not reached. Especially difficult were Randolph's occasional visits when, on his way to the big dam being built back in the mountains under the supervision of the Service, the district man spent the night at Stevenson's shack.

The debauched elements matched in a measure the present ferment in Stevenson's being. The night before Randolph had been there on his way to the dam. Doubtless the district man had meant well enough but in several unguarded moments he had addressed the lookout as "Limited." Whiptown's christening of him had left a sensitive scar upon Stevenson's soul.

He tried the telephone again, but the wire was dead. Somewhere upon the exposed mountain side the line was severed. There would be fires in the timber at dawn, he knew; and if by then he was still unable to raise Whiptown he would have to make the perilous descent to the village with the reports. Nine miles intervened bristling with dangers; and if the storm still endured, even though it would be daylight, every foot of the down-trail would be a match for the keenest craft and the stoutest heart.

He was considering the wisdom of using the other telephone to apprise Randolph, at the dam, of the break in the Whiptown wire, when the bell of that instrument suddenly jangled. Stevenson crossed the room and shouted over the howling of the storm into the transmitter.

"Stevenson!"

It seemed more a prayer than a greeting.

"Thank God, this wire is still up! I'm speaking from the dam—it's Randolph. Our line to Whiptown is down and ——'s collecting up here. Get the village on your wire, Stevenson, and have fifty men start up here at once. No equipment—we've got everything. But they've got to reach here by dawn!"

"What's wrong?" Stevenson shouted.

"High water! It's rising against the temporary structure faster than we can work against it. The entire watershed has been getting a steady downpour all day and by dawn we'll get the full flood from the whole of the back areas. We're crowning the temporary fill now, but to save her we'll have to have fifty more men on the sand bags in the morning when the big water hits us. Otherwise it's a case of dynamite or flooding the valley—or both!"

"Why didn't you send a man through to Whiptown?" Stevenson asked, a vagrant satisfaction filling him at Randolph's discomfort.

"Send a man down those fifteen miles in this storm? A man couldn't last five!"

Stevenson laughed with relish.

"Sort of up against your limitations, aren't you, Randolph?"

"Up against what?"

Stevenson's amusement increased.

"I mean you're about at the end of your rope! But of course you couldn't recognize your limitations!"

"Are you crazy, Stevenson?" the district man shouted in desperation.

"No! But my wire to Whiptown is down, too!"

An explosive oath trembled along the wire. Stevenson scarcely heard it. With thunderous clatter a howling gust of wind took the frail lookout cabin in its embrace and shook it viciously.

"Are—are you sure it's down, Stevenson?"

"I've tried it half a dozen times in the last hour. Been down since noon."

A moment of tense silence ensued, then:

"Stevenson, —— is going to break loose up here in the morning!"

Stevenson's orderly mind swept the circumstances, and even as the district man's plaintive words were trembling over the wire, he was estimating the condition of the down-trail, the smothering intensity of the storm, the measure of his own hardihood to maintain against the difficulties. Stevenson was placing his limits.

"We — we've got to do something, Stevenson!"

"I might be able to get the message down to Whiptown for you, Randolph."

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Eagerness leaped into the district man's tone.

"It's nine miles by the short way, Stevenson! Can—can you make it?"

"Nine miles?" Stevenson laughed again. "You just said a man couldn't last five! And even that's over the limit!"

"—— the limits, Stevenson! Couldn't you forget them at a time like this?"

"Sure I could forget them!" the lookout shouted back with gusto. "But if I did what would happen when I reached the point where I couldn't go any farther? Lay down and die from exposure before the storm was over? That would be heroic, all right. Everybody would say what a game guy he was for trying! But that wouldn't save your dam!"

"What—what else is there to do?" Randolph demanded.

A note of triumph was in Stevenson's voice.

"The thing to do is to forget heroics and play the limits! I'll go down the long way —by the river—that's eleven miles to the village. In a storm like this I figure I can last four miles on the trail. That's my limit!"

"But what good will four miles do?"

"It will bring me to the construction company's cabin on the river. Henderson is there, and although he's a bit on in years he can surely last the next three miles. That'll be his limit and will bring him to the ranger cabin at the base of the mountain. The telephone from there to town is probably still up—it's not exposed like up here on the mountain. And even if it's down there's sure to be one of the boys at the cabin, driven to shelter by the storm. Whoever is there can ride the message the last four miles to town!"

In the silence which followed Stevenson fancied he could hear the sound of Randolph's erratic breathing.

"By ——, Stevenson, I can't figure out whether you're a genius or a —— fool. But when you think of it, it sort of looks like there's something to your limitation idea! That plan's certainly surer than a blind try down the short cut!"

"Sure! It's inside the limits, Randolph, and we're certain to get the message through by midnight. That'll give them five or six hours to make the fifteen miles to the dam by dawn. On the cross-river trail they can use horses for the first twelve miles to the pass. It's a sure thing—you can expect them by dawn! I'm starting!"

Stevenson sprang across the room, picked up slicker and rain hat and was buckling the oilskins about him as he flung open the door and stepped outside. Instantly he was leaning forward, head bowed, struggling against the terrific force of a rain-drenched wind from out the west. Across the flat he forced his way, on toward the summit of the trail down the mountainside.

He went slowly, picking his way, unable to penetrate the driving smoke of the storm beyond arm's reach. He paused abruptly, confused, unable to determine the exact position of the trail. Only an instant, though, was he lost; then a twisting needle of lightning sprang out upon the arc above and went trembling off across the sky. At once the suffocating gloom was shattered and the forested mountainside sprang out whitely vivid through the interminable serpentine of rain.

He reached the trail as a second flash revealed the sea of dripping firs in the valley far below. At that instant he caught a glimpse of the way he must pursue. The trail dropping rapidly, twisted and turned crazily, exposing a traveler blinded by the storm to an endless succession of unguarded bends over which one careless step would send him winging to death.

Stevenson took to the trail, running through the murk with every sense alert and strained for warning of unexpected peril. At each exposed bend where the wind drove full upon him from the west, the drenching downpour was driven horizontally beneath the brim of his hat. He could not lower his face to ward off the lashing intensity of the water; to take his eyes from the trail ahead was to court disaster. He had to go on facing it, suffocated and half drowned, with an added pressure upon his taxed lungs.

AT THE end of the first two miles the difficulties of the way increased abruptly. The trail extended endlessly beyond, straight across the bosom of the mountain wall, exposed at every foot of the way. A thousand tiny torrents, wriggling like glistening snakes down the wall above, emptied upon the trail floor, making a veritable watercourse of it. The unobstructed wind held him back with a million forceful fingers against which he had to

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shoulder his way with all the strength he could command.

The trail left the straight-away and began twisting crazily once more, dipping into rounded declivities and emerging boldly at jutting promontories. The rain was driven through the seams and flaps of his oilskins, wetting him to the flesh. He paused once to relieve his straining lungs, but the cold grip of his damp clothing sent an ague-like chill through him, and he went quickly on.

He came at last to a short plateau and crossed it in full career. Abruptly he halted and stood panting, unable to penetrate the rain-driven smother, but feeling keenly the yawning presence of the great ravine in which the River Whip runs. It should not be far beyond, he considered, going forward tentatively, testing every foothold.

An instant later lightning flashed across the sky, and the ravine sprang out and held as the needle zig-zagged to earth. Far below the Whip glowed in the eery glare and the wooded sides of the declivity were sharply definite through the streaming rain. A moment later amid clamorous thunder the scene was blotted out and the gloom smote the world once more, but not before Stevenson's searching eyes had discerned far below the cabin by the river.

He went on down the steep trail, his fagged muscles protesting every step. Thunder kept up a shattering pandemonium that echoed gruesomely among the bluffs above. Now and again the nearer lightning flashes revealed the dripping world cowering beneath the awfulness of the elements abandoned to fury; and Stevenson, staggering on, drawing upon the reserves of his strength, was overawed by his insignificance in the presence of terrific Nature.

He came finally upon another flat—the last. He had, he realized, reached his limitations. Only the sight of the cabin by the river, revealed by a flashing lance across the heavens, kept him going. His heart was beating riotously in his bosom, straining at its cords, threatening to burst asunder. His breath was sobbing from his lungs, and sheer exhaustion encroached upon the sentiency of his brain.

He shouldered his way through the increasing smother, buffeted by gust after gust of rain-laden wind. The icy drops of driven water stung his face like hail; his flesh grew numb and stiff. The agony of weariness and cold was gratefully dulled as his taxed nerves swooned, registering but imperfectly the onslaughts of the storm.

He staggered on toward the lighted window of the cabin. As he approached the door he shouted lustily, but the sound was lost in the thudding artillery of the thunder. He jerked wildly at the latch-string, and dashed headlong into the cabin's single room.

A man, lying upon the bunk beyond, sat up in amazement.

"Get going, Henderson! Water's rising at the dam—going to flood. Need fifty men from Whiptown by dawn! They can make it, using horses as far as the trail permits. It's three miles to the ranger cabin on the flat. You can make it!"

Henderson, his eyes widening, swung painfully from the bunk and stood leaning against it. He was bent forward in a curious posture, resting the weight of his body upon one foot.

"My God, Henderson—what's wrong?"

"I can't walk a hundred yards, ranger! Rheumatism! All crippled up!"

Stevenson quailed beneath the significance of these assertions. With panic in his eyes he pointed to the telephone upon the wall. "Out—out, too?"

Henderson nodded.

"Since noon!"

Stevenson laughed hysterically, leaning back gainst the door.

"It's—it's come at last, Henderson! I've always been afraid it would! I've reached my limit—and I've got to go on!"

"Can—can you, ranger?"

Stevenson stared at the other curiously.

"I don't know! This—this is the first time! Now I'm going to see. No time to talk. So long!"

With an effort he drew himself up and plunged through the doorway. He was instantly in the fiendish embrace of the storm once more, and at a grotesque, shambling gait flung himself across the flat toward the continuation of the down trail.

He progressed blindly, throwing caution to the winds. For the first time in his life he was beyond his limitations, projecting himself recklessly into the realm of chance, no longer his own master, a plaything now to blind destiny. The experiment piqued his fancy. He found himself responding keenly to defying danger.

The storm maintained its climacteric fury, the elements descending upon him in

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unrestrained fury. He went doggedly on, running to the utmost of his physical ability. He lost all count of time, of place. A numbness grew upon his feet, rising to the ankles like the insidious spread of death. But it did not interfere with his shambling progress. Indeed it seemed to lend wings to his feet.

He was amazed that he was able to keep on now that his limits were so far behind. His muscles, his heart, his lungs, all protested for rest, yet they continued to function in response to his will. His wonder increased as he went on; it baffled him to coceive the source whence came this power to maintain beyond his limitations. It defied experience and made a mockery of calm judgment.

The realization smote him suddenly that he was upon level ground. The trail was no longer a ledge clinging to the bosom of the mountain. It was a wide smooth way between park-like stands of gigantic firs. He went doggedly on, maintaining a stubborn incredulity against the thought that he had left the mountain trail behind. It was impossible! Yet an instant later a flashing blade of lightning leaped across the sky revealing far ahead along the trail a dripping structure of logs.

An outrageous hope filled Stevenson. It was the ranger shack! The telephone-line would be up; he would be talking with Whiptown in ten minutes. And even if the wire were down, some one surely was in the cabin on such a night. Most likely one of the rangers driven in by the storm. He would have a horse—could ride the four miles to the village. Stevenson would lie down on the bunk and sleep!

He staggered on, glowing with anticipation. Fifty men would start for the dam; Randolph would find them coming up the ravine in the first light of the dawn. There would be no flood, no desolated valley, no deaths.

The cabin was dark, he saw, as he swung crazily toward it. But some one was within! That must be—in case the line was down. He staggered on, the breath coughing from his lungs. His limitations, which he had momentarily cheated, were returning, now, clamoring for a cessation of this defiance of their established suzerainty over him.

He flung open the door, groped across the familiar room to the fireplace, found and struck a match. In an instant the lamp was alight, and holding it above his head Stevenson surveyed the room. It was empty, no blankets were upon the bunks.

With trembling hands he set the lamp upon the table and sprang across the room to the wall telephone. He snatched the receiver and placed it to his ear. After a moment he rehung it. He knew the sound. The wire was dead.

The breath was whimpering from between his lips. He staggered to the table and stood swaying drunkenly beside it. With blurred vision he gazed at the whipping storm outside the open door. It was four miles to Whiptown. He blew out the lamp and lunged across the room.

DISTRICT RANGER RANDOLPH, seated before the fire-place in the dam headquarters cabin, glanced up as the superintendent slammed the door behind him against the screeching gale. Removing his dripping oilskins, the superintendent looked at his watch.

"Eleven thirty!"

Randolph nodded.

"Henderson should have reached the level by now. Either Whiptown has our message or will before long!"

The other shook his head and dropped listlessly into a chair. "I wish I had your optimism, Randolph!"

"Why not? It's almost a sure bet the way Stevenson planned it!"

The other smiled wearily.

"Nevertheless, I told the powder man to get the charge ready."

An instant later the two men were startled out of their chairs by the jangling of the telephone bell. For a moment they stood looking at each other; then Randolph sprang to the instrument.

"Hello, Stevenson!" he shouted.

"It's Henderson, sir, at the construction cabin!"

"Henderson? My ——, man, why aren't you down at the ranger shack by now?"

"All crippled up with rheumatism. Crawled outside a while ago and found the break in the wire just above the cabin."

"Stevenson!" Randolph shouted. "Has he got there yet?"

"Two hours ago! He's in bad shape—all in and talking kind of crazy about passing his limit!"

"Where is he now?"

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"Gone—gone on!"

"My ——, he'll never make it—alone!"

"Of course he won't. Worst storm I ever saw—a man can't live long on an exposed trail in it! He's dead some place probably, between here and the level. He should have reached there long ago, and he hasn't!"

"Hasn't? How do you know?"

"I just raised the ranger shack. Some —— fool was there—said he just got in. Stevenson wasn't there. I gave this fellow the message and told him to phone it to town. He said he'd been trying the wire, but it's dead. Then I told him to take the word himself. He laughed at me. Said he almost passed out reaching the cabin and he was going to stay right there. Then he hung up, and he won't answer the bell now! Is—is there anything you want me to do?"

"Do?" Randolph laughed bitterly. "There's nothing to do! Stevenson had the right idea. We're up against our limitations!"

"That's what he said to me! Shall I keep on trying to raise Whiptown? There may be men out working on the wire."

Randolph glanced at his watch.

"Not much use, Henderson, but you might keep at it till midnight. After midnight it's no use; the men would have to start by then to reach at by dawn."

"All right, ranger. I'll report if I can raise them."

Randolph up hung the receiver and turned to face the superintendent.

"Stevenson tried to make it to the level by himself—and didn't! That about means you'll have to blow her at dawn."

UPON the wide main trail Stevenson was running at a grotesque gait, head and shoulders forward against the beat of the storm. In his ears an added thunder roared, driven upon him by the wind from out the west. It was the thudding of the surf beyond Whiptown. The village, he knew, was not far off.

As he ran he fumbled inside the flap of his oilskins and withdrew his clenched fist bearing his watch. As lightning split the sky once more he opened his fingers and read the dial. It was eleven thirty. Returning the watch to his pocket he laughed with a freedom something more than normal and was half-suffocated by a drenching burst of rain.

He was hugely amused. He was going on, yet it was ridiculous that he was going on. Exhaustion should have dropped him long ago; yet he did not even feel fatigue and the agony of spent flesh was forgotten in the persistent renewal of the spirit. Locomotion appeared to be effortless; the miracle of perpetual motion seemed upon him. Started, he merely kept on.

It was ridiculous, he repeated, driving on against the counter-surge of the gale. Somewhere back upon the desolate miles he had lost Stevenson—the physical Stevenson. That was it! He was released from his body; his will, stark naked and gloriously free, was projecting itself through space.

Abruptly there were lights ahead—the lights of Whiptown. How they had got there he could not remember. Was it moments ago or hours ago that he had staggered out of the ranger cabin? He did not know. He was living from instant to instant, each passing moment forgotten in the realization of the next.

It must be nearly midnight, he calculated, as the lights, reeling crazily, grew momentarily nearer. He must be within the village by midnight—not later. With outrageous confidence in the unreasonable he willed himself to greater speed. Somehow it came. There was no limit! Laughing, he ran on.

Over the wooden bridge Stevenson pounded and out upon Whiptown's principal street. He passed many houses with lighted windows, but he continued on until he reached the residence of the mayor. There he halted, leaned against the jamb, and pounded lustily upon the door.

A light sprang out upon the transom above, and footsteps descended the inner stairs, while upon Stevenson the inescapable flesh began to return, bringing its agonies of fatigue. He was trembling upon the brink of darkness when the door was flung open and Whiptown's chief executive faced him. Stevenson fought off the encroaching darkness and babbled his message.

Fifteen minutes later, while Whiptown's male citizenry assembled in the public square, Ranger Stevenson was carried between the doctor and the sheriff to the village hospital. He was unaware of his arrival in the tiny white ward, but while his clothes were being removed he abruptly regained consciousness and at once set up a

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struggle to reach the door. He flung the little doctor sputtering half-way across the room, and severely challenged the sheriff's superior weight.

"What's the matter with you?" the physician demanded, regaining his dignity and his hold upon the patient. "Where in —— do you want to go?"

Stevenson's blurred eyes swept the physician's countenance.

"Dam!" he muttered, struggling once more. "Everybody's needed! I know the way!"

"The —— fool's crazy!" the sheriff commented, staring at Stevenson. "He wants to go up with us and he's more dead than alive!"

The doctor, clinging to Stevenson, called to the woman who hovered close by.

"Give me the hypodermic, nurse!"

"Dam!" Stevenson whispered, setting up a fresh effort to gain the door. "Come on!"

"Stevenson," the doctor shouted severely, "you've reached the limit of your physical endurance and——"

"Limit?" Stevenson screamed, turning upon the physician. "It's a —— lie! Who—who said I had a limit?"

An instant later, while the nurse held Stevenson's arm, the doctor punctured the skin with the hypodermic needle and pressed the plunger to the hilt.

"Guess that'll show you who's got a limit!" the physician growled, winking at the sheriff.

But somehow the officer couldn't see the humor. He watched Stevenson succumb to the drug.

"And to think I named that guy Limited," he exclaimed softly.

At the dam a sodden dawn broke under a clear blue sky. Randolph, finishing his breakfast, looked up at the superintendent and smiled.

"It seems as peaceful as can be, and yet hell's pouring down on us off that watershed! Pretty tough on you, super, seeing all your work go up!"

The superintendent scraped back his chair and rose.

"Forget the sad music, ranger."

They started as a shout reached them from outside.

"Come on. The powder man's signaling for us. Let's bury her and have done with it."

They were getting into mackinaws when the door was flung open by a man who turned and pointed wildly down the trail.

"Boss—they're here!"

Through the open door they saw them then. In single file, around the last bend in the down-trail, came a serpentine of men. They were running—there seemed no end to the file. Randolph recognized the sheriff in the lead.

The district man and the superintendent sprang outside. The sheriff had reached the flat.

"Where do you want 'em, super?"

"This way!" the other replied, running off to lead the file to the work beyond.

The sheriff continued on toward Randolph, who drew up breathlessly before him.

"What—what happened, Dan?" Randolph demanded.

"We got your message just at midnight. Made pretty fair time—used horses to the pass."

"How did you get it—the message? Did they get the wires up?"

"Wires ——!" The officer laughed. "Stevenson brought it!"

"Stevenson?" the district man repeated.

"Sure. Came staggering into town just at midnight."

Randolph licked his lips, his eyes blinking.

"Do you mean to say that Limited reached town?"

The sheriff laughed again, eying the district man sharply.

"You might put it that way, ranger; but if I was you I wouldn't. He's plumb unlimited these days and he objects pretty strongly to being called Limited. Take my advice and don't call him it—unless you have a hypodermic needle handy!"

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Author of "The Burial of Billy," "Joe Monkeyface," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

NEW GUINEA is the largest and most fascinating of the few remaining unexplored spots of the world. Upon its cold mountain-tops, in the steaming shadows of its jungles, upon the swollen surface of its swift mysterious rivers—anything is possible. Within its interior is still locked the secret of immeasurable riches—locked by the poison of its swamps and the untamed ferocity of the cannibals who swarm in its jungles.

Three nations have seized a foothold here—Great Britain, Holland, and Germany.

But the greatest power in the land, at the time "Red" Saunders, skipper of the *Black Pearl*, appeared at Finschaven, was Nuanou, paramount chief of all the cannibal tribes of the unexplored *Hinterland*.

Only one man had made any advance into Nuanou's domain—Herman Neuman, a German, who had discovered rich gold deposits near the headwaters of the Kaiserin Augusta River.

After a terrific fist fight with Red Saunders in the depths of the jungle, with the concession to the diggings as the stake, he had lost out to the Britisher, and renounced his claim in favor of the adventurous skipper.

With this excuse to penetrate a savage country, and spurred on by fabulous accounts of the richness of Nuanou's throne, Saunders set forth on a private expedition that was destined to disturb the Governments of three great powers.

At Finschaven he left behind Herr Koesch, an administrator, murdered and unaccounted for, and an unknown white enemy from whom he had rescued Jacky, a badly beaten native.

Saunders had boldly sailed with his mate, Tod Carter, for Port Moresby to obtain the sanction of the British authorities to the proposed expedition—had gone to sea in defiance of German authority—sailed away with two strange passengers below deck with him.

The first of these, Robert Venneker, was an Englishman of great physical power whom Saunders had known at Eton when they were boys. Through drink he had sunk to the level of a beach-comber—and lower, though never forgetting that he was the only man who'd ever whipped Saunders in fair fight.

Saunders, for his part, could not disguise his contempt for this moral wreck, though at the same time his sympathy for his degenerate schoolmate recognized no limits; for he believed Venneker might some day become a man again.

The second passenger lay hidden below deck until the *Black Pearl* reached the limits of the British dominion.

The pursuing German patrol was overhauling the schooner, and Saunders leaned over the rail to scan the waters ahead.

Suddenly a figure rose behind him—a figure with a dark face split across with a cruel gash of a mouth—rose in silence from the hatchway and like a snake slashed twice with a crooked blade at the broad back of the unsuspecting skipper.

Having struck, the assassin leaped overboard and swam to the German ship.

An instant later Venneker also plunged into the water—but swam shoreward, where he disappeared into the jungle.

Faithful Tod Carter brought the schooner safely into Port Moresby; and in due time Red Saunders recovered.

The delay, however, had been dangerous, for the Germans demanded Saunders' extradition.

The skipper escaped serious complications only by slipping away with his crew in the *Black Pearl* and ascending the estuary of the Fly River hoping to escape any restraint the Resident might intend to put on him.

Before escaping Saunders established a strong bond of friendship with a Dutchman named Oopdyke whose life he had saved by a timely but rough operation.

Jacky, too, had met an old friend in Chief "Long." This old savage became strongly attached to Saunders because of the magic he was believed to control. Long was a repulsive old cannibal, wrinkled, slack-lipped, hideously scarred—but a fighting man, with a bodyguard of filthy, but stalwart, warriors.

The first day of their ascent of the Fly River,

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between dark, dripping forests of jungle growth, Saunders took a party ashore to investigate a plume of smoke that rose out of the forest in front of them.

As they approached, the scream of an anguished man pierced the silence of the jungle. Rushing blindly forward, the boat's crew burst upon a scene of terrible cannibalism, with a white man, a living victim, being turned slowly on a spit before a raging fire.

"Venneker!" choked Saunders. "Let drive, men!"

After a terrific fight Venneker was rescued, and Saunders' party managed to withdraw to the ship.

The next day the ship itself was attacked with great ferocity, and almost captured. The crowded deck seethed with mad fighting.

At the crisis of the combat, fifty fresh, grinning, demoniacal faces appeared over the side.

Old Chief Long had arrived with reenforcements—and the ship was swept clear of the enemy.

That night the Dutchman, Oopdyke, also joined them, bringing information that the jungle was full of strange savages—and Neuman had gone back to his holdings, despite his agreement.

While Saunders was pondering these new difficulties, a twofold interruption came—a pealing yell from Venneker; and, from the shore, a native voice shrilling the news that a Government boat was pursuing them up the river.

CHAPTER XII

THE MAN AND THE MONOCLE

FIRST attending to Venneker, the skipper recognized that the man had awakened to an evil mood. The water-bottle crashed against the cabin door as he entered; the bunk reeked of spilled brandy. Venneker sat like some devil of darkness on the edge of the bunk, crouching and leering toward the door with a broken tumbler poised in his hand, and through slobbering lips he chuckled horribly.

"Want a drink, old boy?" Saunders suggested, advancing quite on guard yet never revealing any trace of apprehension.

He wanted that jagged glass first of all.

"Drink? Yes, blast your confounded soul! You brought me aboard your stinking scow, and now you want me to die of drouth. Give me a bottle——"

"That's what I came in for," smiled Red, reaching out a hand toward the glass. "Sorry you've seemed to be forgotten, but we've had a little bother ashore. Give me your tumbler, old chap, and I'll fetch you a good stiff peg."

"A bottle, curse you! None of your measly pegs."

"Of course. But Tommy has to break out a new case. I'll bring you a peg while you're waiting."

He took the glass from Venneker's trembling fingers, and left the cabin. Returning with a new tumbler he watched the sick drunkard swallow like so much water a full glass of old brandy without a suspicion that it contained a powerful sleeping shot of chloral. With a sigh almost pitiful in its depth the man lay back content, and locking the door after him Saunders went on deck to see after the stranger coming up the river.

"Who is it, Tod?" he asked the mate.

Tod squinted aloft to the schooner's mainmast-head, and Saunders followed his gaze. There, gripping the slender topmast with one hand, his straight leg and the crooked one curled about the cross-trees, Oopdyke held in his free hand a pair of binoculars which were focused on a spot far down the stream.

"Who is it?" the skipper hailed impatiently. The Fly River was no place to be caught napping in, and although it was friendly territory, as far as the shadow of the flag could ensure friendliness, Red Saunders was fully aware of the many and diverse elements aboard his little vessel, and expected to have to keep a keen eye lifting for strangers.

"Thank the pigs, anyhow, Venneker's quiet!" he muttered.

Oopdyke remained aloft for fully ten minutes with the glasses glued to his eyes. Then he uttered a guttural grunt, let the binoculars drop at their strap, and slithered down the backstays to the deck like some uncouth ape.

"Dot's der war canoe ouf a chief," he said.

His tanned face wore a troubled look utterly unexpected in a man who had calmly led in the old cannibal sent out to bring him in from the jungle.

"Dot canoe iss full ouf armed men, Saunders, but it iss von white man who sits in der stern under der canopy, und at der distance only von ouf his eyes schparkle——"

"Corks!" interrupted Red with a wide-eyed grin. "D'ye suppose the blooming babe in the wood from Moresby is after me? He wears a monocle, y' know."

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"Dot's der ferry t'ing, py t'under!" exclaimed Oopdyke; and in a flash he was swarming aloft again.

In a moment he yelled—

"Py der liffing Powers ouf Vunderlandt, dot's de ferry man!"

"Here, Tommy!" cried Saunders to his bosun, while the Dutchman was sliding down to the deck again. "Take Jacky ashore with you sharp. No, swim, don't bother the boat. Tell old Long to hold his men out of sight along the bank, and act on the signals I send to you. Hurry up!"

Then, while two black heads bobbed swiftly shoreward, the skipper held a short, incisive conference with old Tod Carter, and that phlegmatic worthy passed the word around the crew. Half of the seamen vanished grinning, and not even Saunders, who gave the order, could be quite sure where they disappeared to. He turned to Oopdyke as the great forty-five-foot war canoe swept around a mud shallow a quarter of a mile away and straightened out for the *Black Pearl*.

"Who are they after, Oopdyke?" he asked. "You?"

"Me?" the Dutchman grinned in heavy mirth. "Ven der mans at der Residency gomes gunning vor somebody mit var canoes, full mit savitches, und dere's Ret Saunders somevhere apoudt, den dere's only vun answer to dot, ain't it?"

Saunders turned away with a shrug. There was only one thing he feared might bring about his arrest or question here in territory under his own flag, and that was the matter of Herr Koesch's murder. Knowing full well that he was innocent of that, he was resolved to go to any length rather than permit anybody to stop him; and particularly since the man now coming after him—if he was indeed coming after him—was none other than the well-meaning imbecile whom a motherly old system in London had sent out to the heart of savageland as representative of a flag which should have waved over him in the capacity of presser of seaweed albums in a girls' school, rather.

"We'll see what he's after," he remarked to Oopdyke, as the great canoe swept around in a graceful curve and laid alongside the schooner. The man with the monocle arose from his seat of state in the stern, flung back a green puggaree from his face, and hailed in a voice obviously keyed up to pitch by a terrific effort:

"Captain Saunders, you're under arrest! I shall come on board and take charge, and you will return to Port Moresby immediately."

"Thanks," laughed the skipper. "It's quite official and according to Cocker, isn't it? Oh, —— all formality, Baldwin, come aboard first as a guest and have a whisky-and soda. I'm harmless. Oopdyke's harmless. My crew would rather eat than make trouble, and here I am. Come up and spill your troubles. Sure it's me you want?"

"Yes, for the murder of Koesch in Finschaven! I don't mind telling you, Saunders, that I am afraid of you. I'm the last man they ought to have sent on this trip; but I let you get away from Port Moresby, and I'm going to take you back, afraid or not. I warn you that when I step on board it is not Baldwin, but your country's flag you attack if you attack me!"

"It's a brave little man!" chuckled Saunders admiringly.

He nodded to two of his seamen, they reached down, caught each a grip on Baldwin's arm, and hauled him over the side with gentle yet wholly efficient ease. Oopdyke stood watching, with a subtle smile on his broad face.

"Dot's a tough crew jou haf, Mister Baldwin," he remarked. "Better keep dem oudt ouf der schooner, unless——"

"Oh, pardon me!" cried Saunders. "I forgot your men, Baldwin. Call 'em up, and let my boys feed 'em. Don't worry about your job until I've given you a peg. I never run from legitimate punishment. If I've done anything, I'll answer for it, never fear."

BALDWIN came over the side visibly agitated, and not the least palpable of his worries was rank fear of his own men. As he stepped down on deck some of his cannibal canoemen hustled him in their own haste to sample that free gorge of tinned meat they had heard mentioned; and Baldwin shivered.

However, he put on a bold face and refused the skipper's proffered hand as he passed along to the cabin with Oopdyke bringing up the rear. For an instant anger flashed in Saunder's fine gray eyes, then the saving grace of humor triumphed.

"You needn't act like an ass even if you

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are afraid of me," he laughed. "I'm not asking you to shake the hand of the murderer of Koesch, mind that. Have a drink, confound you, then I'll listen to your tale of wo."

"I won't take a drink, thanks," replied Baldwin, pale and uneasy. "I'll read my warrant, then I think I'd better keep an eye on my chaps. I believe they're more to be feared than you, Saunders!"

"See here, Mister Babe in the Wood, you need a big slug of whisky. If you won't drink it, ——, I'll squirt it into you with a syringe. Here. Why, blast your silly young soul, no man doing his duty ever had cause to be afraid of me. If I were the man you wanted I'd sail you back myself; but I tell you I'm not, and haven't the least idea who killed Koesch. Drink, you ass, and let's hear all about it."

Desperately Baldwin swallowed a generous peg of whisky, and the flicker of grateful appreciation in his eyes proved well that he had needed the stimulant even while trying pitifully to stand upon dignity.

"That's better," remarked Red, nodding. "Now don't bother about your men. My own boys can take care of them. Proceed with the Riot Act. I'm in a bit of a hurry myself. Want to get along up the river before the rains. Go on."

"I should think even you might stop spoofing in a case like this," returned Baldwin curtly.

He smoothed out his papers.

"Spoofing?" echoed Saunders wonderingly. "Dear old thing, I never spoof. I'm telling you my plans, that's all. Do hurry, there's a good chap."

Baldwin grunted hopelessly and adjusted his rimless monocle with weird contortions of face. He had read as far as half-way through the involved and archaic heading of the warrant, when on deck sounded clamoring voices with more than a suggestion of anger in some.

"Stay here!" the skipper snapped, rising at the first sound.

Oopdyke restrained the nervous Baldwin, and Saunders leaped up the short stairway with a sunny smile dawning over his face. With one swift glance he saw that his crew had taken the canoemen to their bosoms in earnest, had fed them, given them gin, and now were busy keeping their guests in order just the same as their civilized white brothers had to when letting the wine flow freely. Saunders sprang up on to the top of the companion-way house, scanned the shore keenly, and began to semaphore a message.

Immediately he was answered by Tommy, the bosun, whom he had sent ashore for the purpose. He concluded his message, watched until he saw a seemingly endless line of small black figures run crouching along the jungle fringe, then he jumped down to the deck, again and took a more detailed view of the noisy gang forward. Quietly loosening a big deck ax in its beckets alongside the house, he next slipped a full magazine into his .45 automatic pistol, first making sure that it was the right magazine, the one in which he had nicked all the bullets at the nose.

Then he uttered a command in his crew's native dialect, and immediately the little schooner became a howling pandemonium, her decks full of leaping, glaring-eyed savages against which force it appeared certain that the *Black Pearl's* crew must succumb.

Then up came Oopdyke on the heels of Baldwin. The Dutchman wore a wide grin as he appeared; but Baldwin presented a vivid example of pride of race overcoming physical terrors, for, monocle stuck fast in his eye, pale as death, bearing no weapon except a futile little stick of Malacca, he stepped out with knees that obviously knocked, and joined Saunders as that imperturbable seaman slipped the great ax from its place and stepped over to the rail toward which the fracas seemed to converge.

"What is it?" stammered Baldwin.

"Your gaudy mob of scuts!" snapped the skipper, turning away to hide the twinkle that persisted in lighting his eyes. "Nice sort o' thing, I say, to send a gang o' cutthroats like that to a peacaeble man's ship! Look at 'em!"

He suddenly roared so that his bellow echoed far out into the forest:

"Come, boys! Drive 'em! Drive 'em!"

Old Tod Carter dropped out of the main-rigging, as if he had only just realized that something was wrong, and right behind him slid one of the Gilbert Island seamen, trying hard to appear frightened. The great canoe alongside lay immediately beneath the main-chains, and two villainous savages held on to the lines, clearly seething with frenzy at the unseen mêlée overhead.

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Then sure-footed Tod Carter made an nforgivable misstep. As he turned to ump from the rail to the deck, his foot ent the wrong way, he tottered, grabbed ildly at the rigging, and lurched outward i a sprawling tumble into the canoe. But iat was not all. In his stumble, he caught coil of line the sailor was bearing, and in- olved the man in his fall. Both lighted ith a thud in the great canoe, falling less wkwardly than might have been expected. ike a flash, the two canoemen jumped pon them and it looked like a lurid finish o grizzled old Tod Carter's career.

"Call you to witness your men started it!" ried Saunders, and with the words heaved he great ax with all his strength, seemingly traight among the fighters in the canoe. But for once his aim was at fault. The road blade missed the men, and crashed hrough the thin planking of the canoe, let- ing in a torrent of yellow river water.

Baldwin stood aghast at the apparently lesperate fight afoot on deck. For the crew of the *Black Pearl*, seeing their skipper's action, rushed their erstwhile guests and drove them aft, cracking shrewd blows with handspikes and belaying pins, to which the canoemen were unable to respond. Some- iow they had forgotten or mislaid their spears. Only one, a sort of petty chief, wore a club, and a smiling seaman grabbed that and pitched it into the river early on in the trouble.

But the skipper was still busy. As Tod Carter and the seaman reached up and seized the main-chains, his pistol began to pour expanding bullets along the bottom planks of the great canoe. Then somebody, it may have been Carter, hanging by one hand from the rigging, passed a knife through the canoe rope, and the sinking craft drifted slowly down-stream. The yell of the men in the sinking craft was answered by the chorused howl of their fellows on deck, and now by twos and threes the frantic men of Baldwin's force leaped to save their boat.

"By Jove, I believe you did that on purpose!" gasped Baldwin, dry-throated, as Saunders coolly recharged his pistol.

The only reply he got was a smile of utter innocence; then, with dramatic unexpectedness, from a point a little way down-stream appeared a long line of log-and-brushwood floats, each bearing a feathered and speared warrior, all heading out toward the sinking canoe and the schooner. The canoe seemed to be the secondary object. Toward the schooner they turned.

"Get your anchor, Carter!" yelled the skipper in great alarm. "Get sail on her, boys! Oh, hustle, you lumps! D'ye want to fry over a fire tonight? Then get a move on! Baldwin, I advise you to go below. This is something you're not used to."

A devilish yell arose, a few long spears sped through the air, and gunshots, too, cracked out. Baldwin gloomily followed Oopdyke below again, and permitted the laughter-shaken Dutchman to press whisky upon him while his pallid lips quivered and his hands shook at the noise of terrific savagery above. In the little cabin, hot and stuffy, they presently felt a gentle breeze as the schooner got under way and the big mainsail drew, spilling wind down the skylight.

The furious yells astern grew louder, gunshots were as cannonshots, and the stern voice of Red Saunders was heard urging his lads to their utmost efforts. Then the sounds of pursuit diminished, the tinkle of water could be heard outside the little vessel's skin, and presently all sound ceased entirely except the natural sounds of a vessel in motion. Saunders entered the cabin.

"Awfully sorry, Baldwin," he said. "Really you ought never to have come out with such a crew. Why, man alive! only for the eternal readiness of my chaps we'd all have been cooked and eaten by your own men first, then by their pals ashore. Afraid you'll have to carry on with us for a spell until I see a chance of breaking out of the river. Just now it'd take a war-ship to burst through that cannibal tribe waiting for us below."

"I'm sorry about my chaps," replied Baldwin, not a bit more colorful of visage than before, not a bit less tremulous of hands, but with all the stubbornness of spirit that has made white predominant among the motley of the world; "but really you ought not to have given them liquor. As soon as you think we are out of reach of those other savages, please anchor. I shall carry you back to Port Moresby, as I set out to do, thanking you, of course, for your services just back there."

"Still harping on the same string," smiled the skipper, taking a peg of whisky for himself. "You apparently only know very little about me. No man, even an

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enemy, charges me with being a liar. I repeat, I know no more than Oopdyke here about who killed Koesch. That being the case, I shall leave you to do your duty and carry me back if you can. But, dear old chap, don't imagine for a moment that I'm going to carry *you* back.

"I won't spoil your little trip by rudeness," he added, "but I'll be everlastingly scrubbed with the dhoby itch if I do your dirty work for you. Better chuck up the job and join us. With a bit of coaching, and a grin instead of so much bally dignity, you'd make a decent man. Anyhow, here you must remain until it's safe below."

Baldwin seemed uneasy. In fact, since his first appearance he had never once looked as if in love with his task; and the very air about the little schooner and her jovial skipper and crew seemed seductive to a man who was a misfit in any case where Fate had placed him.

"Er—I —— it, Saunders, if I could convince myself of your entire innocence in that Koesch affair, I'd feel like chucking up the bally job, really I would; for though I feel that you've fooled me somehow, I can't help admiring you."

"Look here, Baldwin," said Saunders seriously and tersely, "I make allowances for you, because apparently you haven't learned to know a man when you see one. Once for all, listen to this: I last saw Koesch very much alive. Lively enough, I believe, to have set a knifer on me twice. As for his death, I no more killed him than you did, or your brother still at my old school at home."

"Will you swear it?" asked Baldwin, obviously convinced but unwilling to quit until his conscience was wholly satisfied.

"Yes, I swear it!"

"Then I shall wait for a more auspicious moment to return," nodded Baldwin, and accepted with fingers that trembled less than before another peg of whisky-and-water.

As he raised it to his lips, a door creaked, opened, and Venneker stumbled into the cabin from his stateroom, disheveled, unshaven, red-eyed, groping out feverishly for a drink. And as he passed Baldwin he leered down into his face and laughed horribly.

Baldwin screwed his monocle tighter, squirmed in his chair, and swallowed his whisky as if suddenly oppressed by a foreign, unwelcome foreboding.

CHAPTER XIII

VENNEKER'S PURGATORY

FIFTY miles from the estuary, the Fly River bends sharply to the north, and the country it runs through takes on a more sinister, barbaric aspect. Even its people are different, of another brand of hideousness, of a deeper degree of devilishness.

As the schooner made the turn, almost stopped by the sudden off-thrust of the deflected current in the right-angled bend, twilight was followed by darkness with the swiftness of a wink; and, evidence of the change in the country and its people, old Long appeared with his men in the shallow water of the north bank and demanded to be taken on board.

"Forest him full ob debbils, Vellalonga say," Jacky interpreted.

Venneker was making the schooner hideous with his ravings, had done so all day; his blasphemies and curses had been blood-curdling, shocking even to Saunders, who was almost shock proof, and only some hidden motive deep in the skipper's heart prevented Venneker being harshly handled and beaten into sanity.

"Tell him the schooner's full of devils, too," replied Red with a glinting eye; "but if he wants to come aboard he must, I suppose. I thought he was going to give me a stick, or something, that would carry us safely wherever we passed. Ask him what about that."

Jacky grinned as he repeated the question and heard the old ruffian's answer.

"Him say him no sure ob his magic stick now, sar," he said. "More better you make yo' own sort magic. Him tell dat dem mans-he got ain't 'fraid ob forest debbil s'pose dey wid you, but dey say dey own witch man's medicine no strong enough now. Bimeby dey go 'shore ag'in, when dey pass Stricklan' Ribber."

"Der olt poy's got sense," remarked Oopdyke with a chuckle. "Let 'em come, und den make 'm pool mit der boats ahet. Pooty soon gomes der places vhere der vind schall be planketed py der joongle, und der current ouf der Strickland gomes ferry swift, den der schooner vill drift packvarts unless der poats pool like der Old Nick mit

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lines. Baldwin ought to know apout der savitches here."

"They're a bally bad lot," nodded Baldwin emphatically. "I knew a missionary chap who came up here to convert 'em, and they bally well converted him into long pig and had the blasted cheek to send his umbrella and sun-goggles down to Port Moresby and demand a reward for bringing 'em!"

"How d'ye know they ate him?" asked Saunders, watching the line of black heads that began to climb over the rail in the darkness, and keeping count of them.

"We sent a force out, and they found the bones. No mistake about identity, y' know, for the silly blighter had a most pronounced pigeon chest. Queer sort of chap, he was. Quite despised all sorts of natives, and imagined he had only to raise his umbrella, put on his goggles, and preach a Whitechapel sermon in pidgin English to bring 'em crawling to his feet. I believe——"

"How many, Carter?" the skipper shouted as the last head came up.

"Just the tally, cap'n. Fifty-two countin' Tommy and the old chief himself. Where ye goin' to put 'em?"

"In the long boat, right away, as many as can pull oars double-banked. Let Jacky tell 'em. Get the line ahead sharp. I can't see in this infernal gloom whether we're making around the bend or not, and I want to be well past before we anchor again."

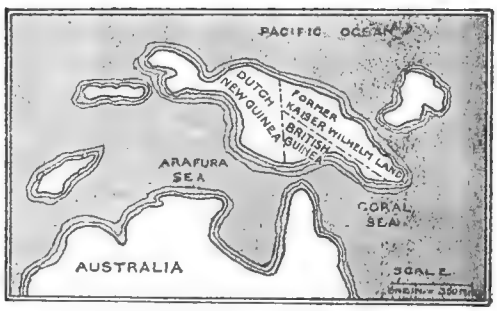
Monkeys chattered as the schooner's tall topmasts brushed through a giant overhanging ponciana and flung some of the frightened creatures into the dark river. In the blackness under the shore the splashes were heard with sharp distinctness; then ugly, slithering sounds, a suggestive snap and crunch or two, and monkey shrieks. The forest seemed suddenly peopled by tormented souls; in the boat ahead old Long and his savages howled weird canoe chants to bolster up their courage, toiling gladly at the unaccustomed long ash oars because thereby the perils of that hideously aroused forest might be escaped.

"Either of you know this —— river?" Saunders asked of Oopdyke and Baldwin, when even the boat ahead was lost to sight, and only the frequent fouling of the topmasts in the trees gave warning of too close approach to shore.

"*Ja*, dere iss a wide reach yoost apout here," grunted the Dutchman. "If you find der middle ouf it, dere iss plenty room to anchor und swing clear ouf der bushes; but if der middle iss missed dere iss von plutty schticky big mudbank dot vill holt you until der rains gome, py Jiminy!"

"Sing out to Long to try for depth with a pole!" the skipper hailed Tod on the forecastle. "Get me a cast of the lead, too, while he's prodding——"

Gently, without a jar or sound of striking, the schooner slid up on the very mudbank her skipper was seeking, and Saunders laughed resignedly.



BRITISH GUINEA IS THE TERRITORY OF PAPUA

"That's what I call close navigating!" he said. "Carter! Never mind the lead. Call in the boat and carry out a light anchor ahead and astern, then let the men come aboard. Set a double watch, and let the boys turn in. Come Baldwin, come Oopdyke, we may as well get supper. How long before the rains?"

"I don't peliefe ve schall vait for der rains," the Dutchman chuckled. "Maybe jou vill knock von big hole in der mudbank mit der ax," he added, with a sly grin at Baldwin, following the skipper below. "Anyvay, der sound ouf supper vhistles cheerful in mine ears."

THE cabin was strangely quiet as they sat to the spread quickly laid by Tomba. Ever since he had awakened, Venneker had kept the schooner in a hideous uproar with his ravings; now he was peaceful as a babe, and Saunders got up from his chair at the head of the table and went to peep in at him. A dim light burned in a swinging lamp, and by its faint radiance the powerful form of Venneker could just be discerned behind the curtains of his bunk.

Saunders stepped over to the bed and peered earnestly into the once handsome features, now lined and pitted with the

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frenzy of a tortured spirit. Impulsively he laid his hand upon Venneker's forehead muttering a sympathetic hope that he might yet preserve a decent man out of a most indecent wreck. Venneker's eyes opened wide, the corners of his lips writhed, and he gripped the skipper by the wrist.

"Good ol' chappie!" he muttered, hoarsely. "Awf'ly good of you, Red, y' old ruffian. Le' me alone a bit, will you? I'm comin' out—out—out o' pur—purg't'ry. Be alri' in morn——"

The tired eyes closed again, and the grip on the skipper relaxed. Saunders swiftly glanced around the little cabin, but saw no trace or sign of liquor remaining. He returned to the supper-table, convinced in spite of himself that Venneker had fought a man's fight against his horrible state, and was emerging victor.

"How's the blue-devils chap?" asked Baldwin, busy with a canned oyster stew.

"He's quiet," replied Saunders. "Looks as if he'll beat the blue devils off his own bat. I thought his eyes and his grin were a bit crooked, but perhaps— Oh, ——! give the chap a chance, and he'll come to time. What's in that dish, Oopdyke?"

Only the indescribable hum of a forest by night, mingling with the ripple of water sliding around a stranded ship on a shoal prevented the night being absolutely dumb. After supper the windows of the cabin and state-rooms—grandiose term, this, for the cosy little sleeping berths of the *Black Pearl*—were opened to the night breeze. They were soon closed against the river and jungle reek, and the skipper led his guests on deck to smoke their cheroots, tobacco, or cigarets, each according to his taste. Before leaving the cabin, Saunders again looked in on Venneker, saw that his water *chattie* was dry, and took in fresh, cool water himself.

"Want anything old chap?" he asked.

"No, blast you! Oh, 'scuse me, Saunders, 'm not quite myself yet," Venneker had replied.

"Want a drink?"

"No!"

"It'll help you to get to sleep. Totally cutting it out is never very successful. Shall I bring you a peg?"

"No. Might let me have somebody in here though. Haven't finished with the red scorpions and blue snakes yet, Red. Won't you send Jacky in? He needn't be afraid of me now."

The skipper gladly agreed. He stepped over to the square window, and would have closed it.

"Leave that!" snapped Venneker viciously. "D'ye want to stifle me as well as have me die o' thirst?"

Saunders went out and called Jacky; then he rejoined the others on the after gratings with his cheroot, vaguely aware that besides Venneker's surprizing outburst, compared with his previous attitude, there had seemed to be a sharp aroma of brandy still hanging about the little cabin. Thinking, reasonably enough, that such a reek was nothing really surprizing when Venneker's habits of the past day or so were recalled, he dismissed the matter, glad that any improvement could be seen, and brought up a subject more near his own intimate concerns.

"Oopdyke," he said, "tell me about that stuff of Nuanou's. Between you and Baldwin I'm not so certain that the old thief's throne and footstool are the most important things on earth. Here I am, stuck fast on a mud-flat; there's Baldwin, simply eating up my stores, drinking my whisky, and sitting tight until he can see me escorted back to a dear little scaffold, with a pretty little hemp collar, to make a bloomin' Port Moresby holiday. There's you, cool as Billy be ——, also yaffling up my stores, and never caring if it shows, and saying that what I'm after isn't a scrap o' paper compared with what you're going for. Back of all there's something queer about Venneker, and something queer about Neuman, and something —— queer about the murder of Koesch, of which I know nothing, but which threatens to cause me mild annoyance at least.

"You've seen the gaudy furniture. Just what is it? Is it worth while carrying on, or shall I take Baldwin back and let him see me playing a tune on one string and dancing on nothing?"

The big skipper clapped Baldwin heavily on the shoulder and laughed quietly. Baldwin squirmed in his deck-chair, for he still held to his principles and meant eventually to take Red Saunders back to justice, in spite of present congeniality, and his personal distaste for the job. That he was physically frightened out of his seven wits made no difference whatever.

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"But you're not going after Nuanou's furniture this time, Saunders," he said. "I have to remind you that at the first real chance I shall conduct you back."

"Dear old thing!" smiled the skipper, genially passing the whisky and sparklet soda. "Of course you shall conduct me back. Matter o' fact, I already look upon the noble Baldwin as a sort o' elaborated Cook's agent, and I shall be highly delighted to be escorted to the gallows by such a paragon of constancy—when our friend convinces me that it is me he really wants. Now Baldwin, shut up! I've given you a lot of sport, but this trip wasn't made up out of dreams, and I'm going through with it unless Oopdyke tells me that the game isn't worth the candle. How about it, Dutch?"

"I tolt jou I had der plessed schtool unt t'rone seen mineselluf," answered Oopdyke, with heavy finality.

"But is it like the tales about it?"

"It iss yoost so goot as der stories make oudt, und den vort' a whole lot more. Papua iss full mit chewels und golt, und iron und coal, und oil und— Oh, vot's der use? Papua's yoost so full mit wealth as it can holt, und dot's why I am here, und vhy Neuman iss dere, und vhy Shermans und Dutch und British make poundary lines und holt dem far payont all seeming reason. Dot iss vhy old Nuanou has not only a throne und a stool made ouf golt mit rupies und emeralds for unholstering, but pesides holts like death to a frozen Malay to his territory left him py der thieving Powers, mine own vit' dem.

"Ach! Dere iss no difference between us, except dot ve each pelief our own nation iss der cheese ouf goot faith, und fight like hellcats to preserve vot iss called national honor. Dere iss a vord jou English und Americans spell altruism, ain't it? Vell, it ain't spelled right venever gomes it to taking ofer lands from natives; und dot goes vedder it iss Yankee or Englisher, Frenchmens or Shermans, vedder it iss py treaty or conquest, py missionary or trader dot de qviet leedle schtealing takes place, but——"

Oopdyke paused, crammed more vile native tobacco into his pipe, and lighted it from the smoldering dottle remaining in the sizzling bowl. When the reeking smoke screen was again filling the air and making his companions' nostrils quiver, he concluded in a very different tone of voice:

'But dere iss it. Our country says, 'Preserve the integrity ouf your flag!' und right-avay oudt ve gome, Baldwin, und me, und Neuman, und Koesch, und make a putty leedle var in a place vhere der Almighty has alreaty planted vars enough. Pass der sqvare-face, Saunders, und der cool vater. To der —— mit poundaries for tonight. Der oldt scoundrel's furniture iss vort' vhile, mine frient, und I hope jou vill succeed vit jour seeking ouf it."

Oopdyke drank thirstily of his gin and water, and then, in his own natural good-tempered tone added:

"Jou petter go mit der schkipper, Paldvin. He von't let jou take him pack to be hung-pefore he's retty, und by choining mit his party jou vill see more ouf life than jou haf dreamed ouf yet."

Baldwin vouchsafed no reply. Under the awning the smoke swirled soothingly, the cool water *chattie* circulated in the wake of the square bottle, and alongside the schooner rippled the current, growing swifter it seemed as the hours dawdled by. In the dim waist of the vessel shadowy figures moved ever and again, keeping watch as ordered, making no sound which might conceal other sounds giving warning of intrusion. At the stern of the schooner the long boat pulled gently at a long painter made fast to the taffrail.

In the cabin Tomba's lusty snoring sang a cantata of sleep with the excruciating nasal tenor of old Tod Carter. From Venneker's quarters during the evening an occasional moan, or perhaps at moments a shriek, had been heard, and, succeeding each, the agitated voice of Jacky soothing the man, whom, of all under the heavens, he stood most in fear. Now these sounds had ceased; and the jungle shores seemed to sleep under the coldly aloof stars.

It was the most natural thing in the world that one by one in their comfortable canvas chairs Saunders and Baldwin and Oopdyke slept. As reasonable a thing to happen was that the deck watchmen, knowing the after part of the schooner to be occupied by three capable men should not keep an especially alert watch there.

When the night was at its blackest, and the great forest at last lay silent, the schooner like a ship of the dead, two dark shapes emerged from the cabin companionway with stealthy tread, one crouching with out-jutting head like a desert vulture or

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mountain condor, the other following almost on all fours, palpably in dire terror, but so far under the influence of the other that fear had no power to urge him to revolt.

To the taffrail they stole, making no sound, passing clear of the three deck chairs, and the man in front seized a half-full bottle of gin as he passed, tipping it to his lips and swallowing the entire contents with an unhesitating gurgle. His companion seemed on the point of flight then, for the passing of the liquor out of the bottle neck made a sound as of a cataract in the stillness. But nothing happened.

They reached the rail, the follower slipped down the rope to the boat, and the leader now followed. A sharp knife parted the rope, and the boat was swept noiselessly away into the night.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PAINTED MEN

A VERY boyish-looking white man sat on an orchid smothered log beside a cane-walled, grass-thatched hut in a squalid jungle village. His pale face was strong in features, his eyes shone with the inner radiance of high resolve, and he was by no means such a stripling in body as his face would suggest. It was the face of a youth possessing a splendid heritage of soul and a body obviously the gift of a clean parentage.

He was trying with inhuman patience to teach two frizzy headed little cannibals the rudiments of learning. The little sons of long-pig-eating fathers were a trial to the teacher—they might have been refused a seat on the Mount of Olives; for they certainly would have preferred dissecting the young man and gnawing his bones clean to puzzling the spoonful of brains they were cursed with at birth over his monsensical Hay, Bi, Seei.

And all about him, as he strove manfully with his hopeless task in the singleness of purpose bred of an ardent desire to see his name in the Missionary Gazette as having made so many more converts, the painted savages of the village scowled and passed, crept around and passed scowling again, men and women alike, all hideous, all hungry, most of them held in check by a few elder dyspeptics who preferred missionary fat to missionary lean, and advised keeping him well-fed, letting him go on amusing himself teaching, until his girth increased.

An ancient hag, flat of breast, prominent of rib, brought him a bowl of baked rat and plantain, and school kept no more that day. His pupils scampered off in impatient glee; the hag grinned toothlessly as he uncovered the calabash bowl, and even her black gums dripped with expectancy when the missionary once more profaned his stomach by feeding it cooked rodent. Only recently had he forced himself to accept the horrible food; it was only when he did so, and finished two or three successive meals of rat, that his parishioners decided to let him remain alive awhile longer to see if he fattened at all.

Even a discarded slave wife, a toothless, flat-bellied old harridan, may slobber hopefully in cannibal land when a succulent morsel, finely bred, divinely crammed, begins to eat the fattening food.

Ronald Moncreif finished his dinner and lighted a stout briar pipe. Oh, yes, they do! Missionaries smoke, some of 'em.

Anyhow, Ronald Moncreif puffed, not contentedly, still not despairingly. Rather he was beginning to doubt his own strength to persevere. Unlike some of his brethren of the cloth, Ronald was man enough to face the cannibals physically, if the pinch came, without falling back upon meaningless words, printed or spoken, to snatch him out of trouble. And some of the painted men were too provoking for any but a saint, or a weakling incapable of being provoked.

"I've got to carry on, simply got to!" he exclaimed at last.

And putting a brave front before him he walked through the village, bestowing a smile here, a friendly word in imperfect Papuan there, and always a pat on the kinky head for the suckling babies. If there were any in the village who might hesitate before partaking of one of his spare-ribs, broiled, it would certainly be among the plump young matrons such a hesitant would be found; for the callow missionary was far too clean of mind to understand that the world of traders and unattached wanderers might place a far different construction upon his preference, and only exercised the deeply rooted love for children that lay within him.

He wandered into the forest, leaping across a sparkling little brook in boyish

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exuberance, breaking into a run as soon as he felt the village sufficiently far behind, taking pandanus thickets and small oleander bushes in his long, cross-country stride as he had learned at the fine old school he had attended at home, gripping his mellowed briar pipe tightly between teeth that had never known a dentist, puffing easily as became sound lungs and heart.

At the edge of a wide clearing he shuddered, for the earth was blotched with the débris of past and gone feast fires, some old, some not so old, some disagreeably recent. It was the orgy ground of the village, and bits of twig suspended here and there from other growing twigs bore human hair, human teeth, human finger bones. As he skirted the gruesome spot his foot crunched through a rotten skull; at the next step he kicked into dust the frame of a human torso—breast-bone, ribs, backbone——

"Ugh!" he grunted fiercely, puffing hard at his briar. "What utter brutes! Better be a soldier first and a teacher last in such a beastly country! Glory, how I'd like to fight three sharp rounds with the saw-toothed old savage who rules this place!"

His more recent training resurged upon him, and he had the grace to color faintly under his healthy pallor. Such as he might not fight rounds, three or any number, with any except the devil, and that only in words.

"I don't care!" he cried aloud. "I *would* like to hammer him and all his evil crew into Christian sanity and decency!"

An interruption as startling as it was abrupt broke into his outspoken reverie.

"Another good, godly man yearning after most ungodly privileges!" chuckled a hoarse voice; and out of the dense jungle blundered Venneker, followed cringingly by Jacky bearing a gun that once belonged to Red Saunders, and three bottles of gin encased in straw, tied with grass rope and slung about his black neck.

"Good man!" cried Moncreif, impulsively extending a hand to the white man. "I never hoped to see a white man up here again, after they told me back in Port Moresby they'd cooked the last missionary who was here before me! Glad to see you, old chap!"

The youth spoke with sheer boyish naivete, utterly missing that sinister expression in Venneker's eyes which should have taught him caution at least. As for the cringing of Jacky, that was something he had so often seen nearer to the coastal settlements that he took but the most passing notice of it. It was the attitude of the subdued black man, and while he did not approve of the treatment that made human beings cringe that way, he was wise enough to accept it until such times as he might by example and maturer wisdom prevent more of it.

"Have a drink, son," laughed Venneker harshly. "Here, Jacky, unlimber that ammunition of Holland, you black swine! Give the nice man a swig o' ——fire."

He took a bottle for himself, and drank thirstily, while the younger man regarded him out of doubtful eyes. He mutely refused the bottle that Jacky offered him, but in turn offered his tobacco pouch to Venneker.

"I don't drink much, thanks," he said. "Smoke, won't you? I'm afraid it's past mealtime, but if you'll come to my little shack I can probably find some tinned stuff."

Venneker stood before the clean youngster like some straight, clean pillar of marble that has been dipped in slime. Nobody could ignore the palpable fact that Venneker was possessed of breeding; nobody could lose sight of the equally palpable fact the he either had lost, or was about to lose, every attribute of clean manhood. There was something of the air about him which reminded one forcibly of a fine ship, not broken on the rocks, not battered under by terrific seas, but eaten away by crawling worms that had almost reached the heart of its timbers.

"It's a dear little fellow," he sneered, refusing the tobacco pouch with a sudden gesture. "Tinned stuff? Holy Saint Anthony! Have I come all the way from the river to here in order to eat tinned mule or dundyfunk? Pish, boy! Likewise tush! Lead me to the den of that corking old long-pig baker, Aau, and we'll see what his ovens produce!"

Jacky had followed his master—the man whose beating of him in Finschaven first brought Venneker and Saunders into renewed contact—with trembling knees until they burst in upon the missionary. Thereafter, up to the present moment, he had watched hopefully, yet carefully, for signs of a change in the man whom he, of all living, knew most. Loyalty, fear, cowardice

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or love: Whatever it was that once forced Jacky to withhold full information regarding Venneker, now caused him to watch with dog-like eyes his master as the missionary turned without a word and led the way back to the village.

They entered the squalid area of habitations, and for once Moncreif passed by a young mother with her sooty black infant, earning by the neglect a toothsome frown from a savage lady who might otherwise, in a subsequent moment, have at least shown polite hesitation before setting her teeth into his wish-bone.

"Here's my den," he said. "By the way, I'm Ronald Moncreif, missionary. Come in."

"I'm Venneker. This is Jacky the Ape," Venneker responded, and paid no attention to the obvious invitation to enter the dim little shack before which Moncreif stood expectantly.

Rather he seemed to be seeking for some familiar thing about the place, although no man or woman had given him more notice than a growl of whetted appetite as he passed among the huts.

"Looking for something?" the youngster asked, kindly.

"Yes. I'm looking for Aau, my old pal," returned Venneker with a crooked grin.

Jacky stood behind him shivering pitifully, for he had seen what the others had missed.

Right upon the heels of Venneker's words, the square grass-grown glade in which they stood was filled with feathered, bone-bedecked, painted savages. Every one of them bore a sheaf of long spears; each could have passed for entry into the seventh circle of the seventh hell of the seven-times-seven damned without examination or protest.

Jacky cowered.

Moncreif turned white.

Venneker advanced as to meet old friends, and the hideous mob met his advance with low obeisance and muttered salutation.

CHAPTER XV

CANNIBALS

BEHIND the grotesque mask of the savage leader, a pair of cold eyes glittered, the wide mouth hung loosely open, revealing teeth as white as the eyes were black; teeth filed to sharp points, strong and even, like the teeth of a carnivore.

"Aau!" exclaimed Venneker, and stepped forward and smote the savage heavily upon the breast.

The man appeared to like the lusty form of salute, for he grinned still more broadly, thereby making his face appear as if divided by a red, bone-revealing gash.

"Aau, you bally old ruffian, this is luck! All got up in war togs, too. You go make um long pig?"

Aau grunted somewhere deep in his broad chest, and glanced doubtfully at Moncreif who was gazing in astonishment at the cordial greeting between Venneker and the old villain of a cannibal whom he had never yet managed to placate. Jacky hid behind his master, and was almost overturned as Venneker swung abruptly at Aau's glance to sneer at Moncreif.

"Needn't bother about him!" he growled.

Then adding something in the native tongue he stepped forward and led the naked, painted gang across the clearing toward a squat, low-eaved hut hideously ornamented by a fence and door-posts formed of arm and leg bones with bleached skulls for capitals.

"I say, old chap—" Moncreif started after him, catching his arm—"I say, I don't like to see one of our color deliberately chumming with savages who are avowedly bound upon a marauding foray, which—well, perhaps you don't know quite, but it nearly always ends in a horrid——"

Venneker's face was convulsed with appalling fury. He was pale and thin-lipped, quivering from head to foot. Snatching the gun from Jacky's hands he brought up the butt, drove it with cold, murderous ferocity into Moncreif's face, and flung it down with a curse. Jacky picked it up, stepped over the fallen man whose clean-cut features were now a bloody smash, and followed Venneker to the hut.

All except Aau, Jacky, and one other feathered chief remained outside when Venneker entered, and soon the little village hummed with excited murmurs.

When at last the men emerged, there walked with the blackest, fiercest cannibal of them all a stalwart white man, feathered and painted as they were, bearing woven cane armlets, and necklaces of teeth, seven foot spears and human-hair plumes as they did; and from the hungry women and old men to be left behind arose a hubbub of jubilation.

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"The chief has come again!" was the cry that penetrated to Moncreif's throbbing brain as he slowly recovered consciousness.

"The chief has come again!" was the message grinned at him by the toothless old hag who brought him a gourd of water in which to bathe his tortured face.

"The chief will bring us meat!" was the jubilant howl of full-breasted mothers as their ravenous offspring tugged at them. "Now our bellies shall be full of flesh! Let us eat first the preacher! It will whet our appetites."

As Moncreif bent over the tin basin in his dim shack, tenderly seeking to clean out terrible wounds made by a corrugated gun-butt scored with sand, he recognized among the more familiar voices outside those of many young matrons who had been inclined to smile upon him for his notice of their babies. And all howled hungrily at him. The noise increased when he did not appear, and people gathered about his hut, taunting him with fear, daring him to show them that the Great Being he told them was supreme could save him now from being cooked and eaten by people who believed not as he believed, but believed that the stomach was lord of all.

He groaned with agony as he stuck strip after strip of adhesive plaster across his battered features. In his tiny shaving mirror he could vaguely see out of the corner of one eye the awful mess his face was in. His nose was smashed flat, utterly beyond redemption; one cheek-bone was battered in, and the flesh scoriated as if a rock-crusher had operated on it; his mouth was split at one corner, the lips puffed out like black toad-stools, and gaps in his upper jaw were all that was left of the perfect teeth of half an hour before.

He ignored the rising clamor outside. Truth demands that his real emotions at that time be set forth. So far was he from having lost his manhood in entering his chosen field, that now his first thought was very wide of what might be expected. Not for a minute did he think of going out with gentle words to quiet the snarling pack that bayed him; but like a plain, strong man he muttered as he plastered—

"Oh, Lord, give me leave of absence for twenty-four hours so that I may follow the cowardly hound and deal him measure for measure!"

It seemed, too, as if he believed he had received approval, for, as far as such a face could be said to smile, he smiled as he stuck in place the last strip of adhesive. As a smile it was no howling success; rather it was a contortion; but as an indication of a human resolve, backed by the highest authority, it was quite successful. Moncreif selected a tulip-wood stick, and went out.

He passed through the chattering villagers, and they shrank aside in stark amazement at his altered features. It would be foolish to state that the glint of his eye, the set of his jaw, the general look of dire resolve drove them back; his eyes were invisible, his jaw was swollen to a fatness far removed from any suggestion of resolution, his face altogether had the appearance of a badly bagged pudding; but his step was decided, his figure was erect, and his straightforward stride took him, half-unseeingly, so purposefully among the jubilant crowd of old men and women old and young that they believed perhaps after all his much lauded Master might have some influence over bruised bodies.

He vanished in the forest, and his head was lowered in the painful effort to discern tracks. With eyes so tight shut that he had constantly to prop one open with a finger to see at all, and in order to follow a track through the giant trees he must use two fingers to prop open both eyes, Moncreif made painfully slow progress; and presently the pair of young girls who had been sent to trail him at first returned home with glad tidings of another white fool getting himself lost in the jungle.

THREE hours after Moncreif stumbled into the vast shadows of the Papuan forest Horatius peered through a rhododendron bush at the village which had fallen into the somnolent state of anticipative idleness. He detected signs which told him the true state of affairs. Coming from cannibal stock, still a cannibal at heart, or stomach, whichever it is that makes a cannibal, Horatius recognized the evidences of prepared ovens, of fasting people, both to be filled when the men should return triumphant.

Behind Horatius scowled old Long. In single file behind them were Saunders, Oopdyke, and a dozen of the *Black Pearl's* cheerful crew, flanked on both sides by half of Long's band of savages. Travel stained and torn by giant thorns, Saunders had

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already made up three of the lost hours, and impatiently pushed alongside Horatius to learn why the other lost time should not immediately be retrieved.

"Men all go to war," whispered Oopdyke, interpreting the guide's report. "Der cannibals iss hongry."

"Ask Horatius if he's sure the trail led here."

"No doubt!" replied the Dutchman, after a muttered colloquy with Long and Horatius, in which many of the sharp-eyed followers of the old chief growlingly took part. "Dey say it vos yoost pehind where jou stand now dot der gin-bottle cork vas picked oop, und at dot schpot dere iss der mark ouf a gun-butt in der ground, mit der foots ouf von shod man und von mit naket toes. Dot's nopotty but Venneker undt Jacky, py Golly!"

Like a beam of dark light, if one may imagine such, Horatius darted from cover as a swag-bellied ten-year-old boy ventured outside his hut whimpering peevishly. To steal pigs, children, or ducks much dexterity is required if the thief would get clear with his prey, and Horatius proved himself worthy of the highest honors in thieving, in something less than twenty seconds.

Had he been slightly less dark in complexion he might easily have gone into politics in a far whiter country and made a terrific hit. The child's first cry of peevish discomfort was stopped by the apparition of Horatius; any further outcry was stopped by a huge flat hand clapped across the yawning mouth, and another powerful hand effectually curbed the liveliness of a pair of sturdy kicking black legs.

"Dot's der cheese!" chuckled Oopdyke as Saunders moved to one side, having caught the full significance of Horatius's move in a moment. "Soon ve schall be quick, now. Alretty can I schmell der crackling on der roast pork, py chiminy! Forvart, Ret, jou oldt scallavag! I pet me id ain't Venneker dot's gettin' cooked dis time, vot?"

"If it is, I'll forgive him! If it isn't——"

Saunders left the sentence to the Dutchman's imagination, and led the way at a brisk dog-trot to circle the sleepy village, not waiting now to be guided by any except Horatius, who bore the terrified boy in his arms until the other side of the village was reached, then set him down, spoke to him fiercely for a moment before taking his hand from the child's mouth, and released him, holding a spear, however, at six inches from the lad's banana-fed belly.

For a breath the little cannibal's cavernous mouth gaped wide, his eyes widened with terror, and his fat little body palpitated between fear of the company he was in perforce, and fear of that awesome spear almost pricking his skin. Horatius uttered a word, a single, rasping, biting word, and the boy shut his great mouth with a click, turned obediently, and trotted off along a path which seemed freshly made by a large party of barefooted men.

"If that's the track, then Venneker's drunker than ever!" exclaimed Saunders.

At first the faint path revealed only the footprints of barefooted men, and the broadly spread great toes identified forest savages as distinct from the river and coast people. Horatius had been ordered to look out for the prints of shoes, because Venneker had left marks on the deck from his rope-soled shoes when quitting the schooner. Apparently he had broken a bottle of liquor just before starting, and there they were, perfect prints of his soles, stamped in the red of the cabin carpet on the white planks of the poop leading straight to the rail. The tracks suddenly appearing among the others now were not discernible as those of rope soles, but they certainly wandered from side to side astonishingly, and could hardly be those of anybody but Venneker.

Horatius suddenly snatched up the boy, smothered his mouth, and turned back with a sign of caution to the skipper. Old Long stuck his frizzy head up over a bush, startlingly near at hand, and in the jungle sounded the whispering of slick bodies brushing past leaves as the breeze brushes them.

Then could be distinguished above the other soft noises of a vast jungle in midday heat a queer sort of silent thud and chop, as if some gnome were dissecting some troll with a magic, soundless ax. With it could be heard, faintly, the tearing of boughs, the trampling of brushwood, the deep, sonorous hum of a host of men panting from exertion but still bent upon making some sort of noise to make known their feelings.

Looking through a vista of broken palmettos, which now could be seen to be violently separated from their stems, Saunders and Oopdyke peered in upon a scene that forever remained in their memories, hardened as they both were. As for Horatius

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and Long, and their grinning compatriots, what they saw only widened the grin on their black faces and made them wonder why their white masters could see no fun in it.

A trampled space of low jungle was strewn with bodies. Some were still moving, though faintly, and it was among these that the soft thud and chop originated as other stalwart, hideously painted men moved among them, making dead men out of almost dead men, taking care that none might rise and shame the victors when grass ropes were brought to truss the long pig securely for the march back to the village.

And foremost of the hewers and choppers moved a tall, painted savage, a be-feathered and toothed savage, as appallingly hideous as his fellows; a white man——

"Great guns!" breathed the skipper, aghast. "Is this the answer? Venneker a ——"

Before he could complete his question, before Oopdyke had quite realized the situation, out into the scene of carnage, from the forest, stumbled another white man, a battered, halt, lame, and groping white man, and with a moan of human jubilation lunged wide across the glade and fastened his hands upon the throat of the other white man, dropping a tulip-wood stick as he took both hands to his job.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FACE REAPPEARS

WITH such a scream of fighting hilarity as surely the woods of Papua never knew before, the *Black Pearl's* men followed their adored skipper into the glade. Old Long was not three feet behind, with his scowling, happily chattering men; Horatius tucked the boy under one arm to give himself free play with his spear arm, and Oopdyke paused but an instant to pull his belt around so that his pistol hung at front instead of back.

The surprize was too complete for much of a fight to ensue. The cannibals following the tall white savage had already won a hard battle, and were feeling the gnawing at the stomach that always followed a battle of the tribes. Also, they remembered the villagers at home who would certainly have prepared ovens against their homecoming. With a yell they fled. Only the tall white remained, and he stayed only because of a sobbing, fighting incubus that clung to his throat and would not be flung aside.

"By the hokey! Another white man!" roared Saunders, and leaped across the open space to fasten hard upon the battling pair. "Hey, Venneker!" he yelled, thrusting an arm under Venneker's chin, and the other under the chin of his assailant. "Quit this! Stop it! By ——, if you don't, I'll shoot!"

For answer the man clinging to Venneker's throat snarled in entirely understandable English:

"If you shoot him before I've done with him you'll have to shoot me too!"

"Come and collar 'em, boys!" Saunders ordered. In ten seconds the battling pair were overwhelmed beneath a pile of joyously capable Islanders, sheer weight accomplishing what no amount of courage could do in such a case, and Venneker subsided with a savage growl, the false stimulation of too much liquor suddenly vanishing like a mist from his arteries.

His assailant pitched headlong across his body, praying like one possessed, and the skipper and his men stared down at him in wonder. Such a face, the face of a battle-scarred pugilist to all appearance, combined poorly with prayer; such a ferocious attack as they had a moment before halted went badly indeed with prayer; yet he prayed, and prayed hard. Only the fat-bellied little captive guide showed other than wonder, and he showed glee. He chattered like a fat little monkey into Horatius's ear, and that puzzled savage turned an expansive grin to Saunders. Oopdyke had to interpret.

"Der poy say dis iss der missionary der village from!"

"Missionary!" echoed Saunders. "Can there be a fighting parson in this —— hole?"

"He iss fighting, but I am nod so sure apout der parson!" retorted Oopdyke, grimly. "Nefer haf I pefore seen a parson dot vas trying der neck to pool oudt ouf a man, py chiminy! Und look on dot face, Red! Iss it dot Englanders make parsons such toughs oudt ouf, den?"

"I am Moncreif—Ronald Moncreif," the battered one explained with an attempt at a smile that would have earned him a fortune on Hallowe'en. "I am the missionary in this district. That chap thumped me in the face with a gun-butt, so I prayed for leave

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of absence and came after him, by Jove!"

The missionary staggered to his feet, wiped his face on his arm, and then, like a real missionary, rushed to fling himself beside Venneker and try to revive him.

Horatius sidled up to the skipper, and muttered every word of English he possessed. It was a weird agglomeration, but from it the skipper understood that they had stumbled upon a preliminary cannibal operation, and that surely the men who had fled would be back to rescue the items they had prepared for the feast.

The one circumstance that stood out in most vivid relief was the fact that Venneker had seemed to be the chief of the victors, and that the youngster who had guided them vowed that he was no white man, but a powerful god, a god of battle, of full feeding, of utterly unimaginable wisdom, who had come again after suffering mortal death to lead the tribe to fatness and fat men-children, in place of the battered-faced teacher whose god had been insufficiently strong to guard him against such a paltry thing as a trade gun in human hands.

"All right!" said Saunders. "We'll see how strong the great god's powerful magic is. "Pick him up, Long! Come on, chaps, and we'll go see what sort of a dump our fighting parson friend is billeted in. Oopdyke, you take a couple o' my own chaps and guard our rear. I never heard yet of cannibals quitting a feast before the bones were picked, did you?"

"No! Undt jou von't see it now," returned Oopdyke with a broad smirk. "Py golly, Ret, I haf to hand it to jou for a real plessed chancer! Pless your oldt red het, I'm vit jou too, but I vish Paldvin could pe here, by golly, und see vot sort ouf chance he has to take jou pack to Moresby for a hanging!"

IN THE village sullen silence reigned when the *Black Pearl's* men arrived bearing both the despised teacher and the revered white chief. Even the women and children had vanished; Moncreif led the way to a one-time home which now consisted of a pile of débris more or less scattered over the lot which was his garden.

"Better come down to my ship, sonny," Saunders suggested when Moncreif stood dumbly regarding his ruined home. "This is no place for you."

"I shall remain here until my time is up, or until they kill me," replied the missionary simply.

"Then you are just as big a —— fool as the others who believe a dead missionary can do any good!" snorted the skipper. "All you bally martyrs are simply so many carcasses which might still be soul-inspired bodies. A dead missionary's no more good than a dead donkey—not so much, for a donkey carries more meat! Come with us, you lunatic! We'll repair you and make you fit to teach again. Teaching is what will win, you bally fanatic, not getting yourself cooked and skoffed by a lot o' slack-bellied savages. Besides, you want to talk to Venneker, don't you?"

Moncreif started guiltily.

"I had forgotten him," he said simply.

"Want to cure him now, after you wanted to kill him?" suggested the skipper without a trace of malice or sarcasm.

Somehow the missionary caught his meaning.

"I do," he replied, as simply.

"Then we'll get up and get out. Here, Oopdyke, start the line forward, we've got what we came for."

Venneker was carried. Moncreif had to be helped as the trail lengthened. The *Black Pearl's* crew showed signs of weariness when the full round of a day was completed and still they were short of a resting station. In the gloomy forest, where even the faint path they had followed coming up had vanished, and where untold sounds and strange smells and suggestions accompanied them every step, the sailors felt uneasiness, the savages under Long felt and showed uneasiness, the usually imperturbable Horatius—imperturbable at least since settling down in Saunders' employ—began to glance back with something of panic in his black eyes.

"Feels like a thunder-storm, or heavy rain, or something," Saunders remarked as they passed beneath a colossal baobab and felt the heavy atmosphere doubly compressed under the spreading branches.

"Dot's von ouf dem Papuan dundersturms, mit plenty ouf trimmings," grunted Oopdyke, coolly. "Ve dond't haf to let der natifs see dot ve are scared, dough, captain. Vunce let dem see ve vorry, undt oop goes der apple cart und oudt goes cheeser, py chiminy! Yoost carry on mit der marching, und if von ouf der plessed

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savitches shows funk, hit him ofer der het mit a gun or schpear butt, und tell him dot's der vay der bogy pays oudt anypoty vot shows dey're scared. Do it qvick, too, py golly!"

The threatening sky speedily made good its threat. With appalling swiftness the heavy canopy of giant trees grew black with lowering clouds above, and great drops of rain burst through the interlaced leaves with the heavy thud of solid rather than liquid. Far off thunder muttered and growled; the rain poured instead of dropping as at first; the next thunder-growl sounded startlingly nearer.

A deep sob of rising wind rushed through the blackened aisles of the jungle, and a giant limb crashed down from a lofty tree across the line of march as the blast rose to a howling squall and the rain smashed through the trees like leaden shot. Then a blinding zigzag of lightning lighted the scene like a calcium light for a second, showing up glossy black faces with wide staring eyes of terror, and on the heels of it the thunder burst out in a crackling, smashing explosion. Old Long's men uttered panicky yells, and one or two started to run.

"Hold them!" Saunders cried, seizing a man in his own firm grip. "Oopdyke, set my chaps to work on that great branch and make shelter under it. May as well halt here as farther on. The bloomin' forest seems endless. Ought long ago to have reached the river."

"Ve must be nod far avay, dot's true," returned Oopdyke, getting to work with knife and arms on great broad fallen leaves and palmetto fans. Saunders hurriedly ordered Jacky to pass among his fellows and quiet them, bidding him call their attention to the *Black Pearl's* unfrightened crew. Then, himself uneasy from an entirely different cause, he plunged into the howling blackness and pushed along in the direction in which he hoped the river lay.

As he stumbled on, his way lighted at intervals by the appalling lightning, he splashed through water, and the roar of the wind seemed insufficient to account for that deeper sound which filled the cavernous spaces overhead and around him. The water deepened under his feet, yet it was no stream, as he clearly saw during the flashes. It was level ground, but the water had movement, and apparently he was as far as ever from the river.

"Hope to gracious old Carter's given her all the cable he's got!" he muttered.

It was the schooner's predicament that had sent him uneasily wandering through the hellish elemental disturbance. Such a rain must float her off that mudbank, and if once she dragged her ground tackle free and got momentum, she must either be carried out to the island-covered estuary or driven hopelessly up on a bank near where she lay when he had left her.

Still he found nothing to indicate that the river was at hand. He once believed that deeper roar might be the great flood in mad career; then he listened intently, and concluded it was but the drumming of tons of rain falling down upon the dense foliage of the forest; that and the howling wind that now and then rose to a roar as of thousands of lions.

There came such a flash of lightning as seemed to crackle like a machine-gun right at his ears, and instantly the thunder followed. Somewhere close by he heard a forest giant come smashing down, tearing up smaller trees in its fall, coming to rest so close to him that he leaped back blindly in the darkness to avoid getting involved.

As he landed on all fours in a clump of sodden fern, he heard a yell, or many yells, as if many men had been overwhelmed by the falling tree. He yelled in answer, thinking that his men were in trouble. Yells rang out again, yet there was no voice of a white man audible, and surely Oopdyke at least would have replied. He groped toward the sound, silent now, and came to a sudden halt in the blinding blaze of another terrific flash. It died out, and left him gasping.

It had showed, for one brief instant, a face, a brown, evil face, the face of an Arab, marred by a cruel gash of a mouth.

About the Arab were huddled strange savages, different savages from any he had yet seen, with terror in their eyes that made a ghastly joke of the frightful aspect imparted to them by their queer war trappings.

CHAPTER XVII

LOST, AND A DISCOVERY

INSTINCTIVELY the skipper slipped into the bush and crept noiselessly around to the rear of the strangers. It was easy for even a sailor to pass undetected

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in such a hurly-burly of rain and wind and crashing thunder. Instinctively he turned in what he imagined to be the direction of his waiting men. With no clear idea of the actual track followed since first arriving at the village, moreover bewildered by the inky blackness of the pathless jungle with the inevitable manifold twistings and turnings which only such jungle-bred half-animals as Long, or Jacky, or Horatius could follow with success, Saunders halted at the next lightning flash, and listened anxiously.

There was a reckoning to be paid to that Arab; but payment was likely to be delayed if he tried anything so mad as a single-handed onslaught against the crowd he had seen. He hoped he had passed quite around them, but the lightning had surprized him in an open space, and now he waited to discover whether he had been detected or not.

No sound could be heard except the all-pervading sound of storm. Another lightning flash was not so vivid, the ensuing crash of thunder was mellower, and fully five seconds elapsed between flash and peal. Still the rain teemed down as if an ocean were inverted up above, and still the water underfoot rose and swirled among the jungle roots.

"It must run toward the river, anyhow!" muttered the skipper, a trifle uncertainly however.

He had seen the water flowing just before he stumbled upon the stranger band, and according to his best judgment he had kept a direct course after circling them, so the water ought now to be flowing in an entirely opposite direction. Keenly alert for each succeeding flash, he grumbled because their brilliance was diminishing. In one illuminated instant he saw that he stood among a colossal grove of gnarled tree trunks whose limbs reached down like witch's foul claws, whose pulpy, evil leaves brushed his face dankly.

"Nobody around, that's evident," he concluded. "Wonder how far I've blundered from the boys."

For a moment he was tempted to shrill a signal on his whistle, but refrained. The forest still boomed and roared with falling water; the close ranks of the great trees would smother any other sound almost completely, and foes were as likely to hear the whistle as friends.

For an hour he stumbled on. The rain suddenly ceased, and a dim, gloomy light was to be seen at rare moments through the foliage overhead. In such moments the forest bore an aspect of total unfamiliarity, which was easily accounted for in the main by the effect of the storm; yet there was a difference, too, not to be explained away thus. Flashing on his pocket-torch, Saunders stood still and searched every corner around him with its bright beam.

"—— if I haven't muffed my reckoning and got lost!" he roared, shaking with appreciation of the joke upon himself.

At his feet water still stood ankle-deep, but it seemed not to have any movement now. Except for the monotonous drip of heavy drops from laden boughs to sodden earth, and the peevish chirp of badly ruffled feathered creatures, the vast jungle held a silence which shocked after the hours of turbulent uproar just passed. And up from the black soil and the rotting forest débris arose a steamy reek that caught at throat and nostrils like gas.

The skipper stood for some minutes, rumpling his red hair in perplexity; then he clapped his whistle to his teeth and blew a long, piercing blast, two short ones, and a long one again. After an interval of five minutes he repeated the signal and waited patiently, but no reply rewarded him.

"If the beastly country was level, a chap might get somewhere by compass!" he grumbled.

Already he had been stopped in his compass-directed course by some impassable barrier of Nature in the shape of precipitous cliff, matted bush, or swamp. He now concluded that the standing water he had been in for so long a time was merely a morass whose treacherous middle he had avoided by stark luck. And yet it had flowed. Morass water shouldn't flow.

He knew that in coming up at first from the river his guides had taken the party by a route which was blocked by neither morass nor mountain; and for once he had permitted himself to depend primarily on others; since he had three such capable guides as Long, Jacky, and Horatius, and scarcely expected to be suddenly deprived of all at once, he had neglected to check courses in the interminable twistings and convolutions of the trail.

"Did it myself, that's a fact!" he told the dripping trees, and rapidly calculated a course to follow, then with torch and compass, taking chances on whom he might meet, he plunged at the track anew. Not

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until his weary legs began to stumble among some great boulders did he pause, panting, and grope around for some notion of his whereabouts.

His torch was failing, the forest was as black as in the height of the storm, and the rain began to speed up from drips to huge globules, and then to grow into straight streams of water that fell with the directness of bayonets. Dimly he realized that the surrounding landscape had suddenly changed; that trees still hung overhead, but less thickly; that in place of soft moss and matted jungle underfoot, of low, thickset bush hip-deep, stones of unimaginable shapes and all sizes strewed the earth.

Switching off his torch to save the little power remaining, he blundered around, feeling the stones, seeking for something in the shape of a shelter against the returning storm. Distantly came the rumble of thunder; the forest behind him whispered, grumbled, and started to roar with the coming back of the great wind.

As the downpouring rain reached terrifying volume he pitched headlong into a hollow between two big stones and fell upon something soft and less evil-odored than the rotting vegetation of the jungle. The rain roared and hissed, but he felt none; standing erect, careful of his footing, he reached as high as he could, but failed to touch a ceiling, or roof. Groping at his feet he waited for a moment, and the moss, or whatever he stood on, was dry. Sitting down abruptly, he took out pipe and tobacco, first making sure that his matches were dry so that he might not know the chagrin of a filled pipe and no light. When the burning tobacco sent its soothing fumes to his brain, he snugged down with a weary grunt and closed his eyes luxuriously.

"Now the little birdies can come and cover me up with leaves," he muttered drowsily.

THE hot morning sun awoke him to a day of calm after the night of tempest, to a day of chattering jungle life and steaming earth; also to a realization of his unsuspected position. The beams of the sun fell straight upon his face through a gateway of hewn stone, of two-men height, of narrow width, each side column a single stone, with a single stone square-hewn across the top. The soft, drowsy couch he had slept so soundly upon was simply a heap of fragrant moss, but a heap which had been well-packed down as if by continued use. Saunders gave a swift scrutiny to the interior, then passed outside in brief alarm.

The place he had sheltered in was simply the portal of a long, narrow hall, which opened back into a greater place which he gave scanty thought to at the moment. Examination of the outside showed that whatever lay beyond was hewn out of the solid face of a black precipice that sprang up from the midst of the forest like a tremendous black spar-buoy out of a rolling sea. At one side the ruins of a line of small stone houses were half buried under creeping vines and parasitical fungus. Strewn about the small open space between forest and cliff were bones—ribs, skulls, vertebræ—some of doubtful ownership, some unmistakably the relics of forest beasts.

"Have I been sleeping in a bally lion's den?" he wondered, and darted inside again to sniff intently at the mossy couch.

He was out in the sunshine again in a moment, for two thoughts had come to him. One was, that no lions were known to be in Papua, and also lions were not credited with intelligence enough to build snug couches of moss; the other was that the place had none of the charnel-house fetor of the dens of carnivorous beasts. Rather he was reminded of the refuse heaps of cannibal villages he had seen, where bones were never thrown until the cooked meat from them had been gnawed to the last shred.

Animals ate their meat raw, and, like provident creatures, often buried meaty bones until required. None of that sort of trace offended the nostrils here, although the existing traces were suggestive enough.

Putting aside the thoughts of food, which had been his first on emerging, Saunders assured himself that no other entrance existed near by, then entered the long hall again, thankful that he had conserved his weak torch battery. The faint gleam revealed little except that the excavation appeared to run far into the bowels of the cliff, and that the roof was far beyond the range of his illumination. The floor sloped downward at a gentle incline, and suddenly he caught the sound of falling waters. Just as his torch expired, he saw the flash of a sparkling stream trickling over some unseen declivity, falling musically into a glassy pool almost at his feet.

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His curiosity was excited. He took out his match-box and explored farther, carefully keeping account of the matches left. Dimly he made out stone benches around the vast circular space; vaguely he made out the huge mass in the middle to be a similar bench of vastly bigger dimensions. Then, when he had six matches left, he detected several small openings in the rocky walls, and crept over to the nearest one. He poised a match to strike it as he stood in the opening.

"Phe-ew!" he whistled as an insufferable stench billowed out upon him. He turned away, and saved a match. Across the circle he stepped, sniffing cautiously until he seemed to find a doorway less appallingly defended. Here the match was struck; he entered; and the match burned out in the instant that he saw what he had stumbled upon.

The place was a quarried room, with no door in the opening; but it was furnished with rude comfort, and grasses strewed the floor. He struck another match. He had four left, and a dark winding passage to traverse. Picking up a bit of grass, he tried its burning properties. It was damp, as if recently wetted down. The match was almost gone, and he stepped swiftly around the room, peering for anything which might indicate whether the place was an abandoned retreat or whether an occupant was likely to surprize him.

A cover lay on the couch, or bench, and as he dropped the match he took hold of it with his fingers, feeling of the texture. Unbelieving, he gripped another handful, then, with an exclamation of doubt he struck another match.

"Plaid steamer-rug, by Godfrey!" he muttered, and let the match burn his fingers in his eagerness to look further.

He dared not use another match. He had to get out. But in the swift glance which he swept around the dark hole he saw things which sent him hurrying into the sunlight with a problem biting sorely at his consciousness, and an object in his hand that seemed to burn.

CHAPTER XVIII

A BRIER PIPE

FIRST scaling the rock in which the chambers were hewn, he tried to locate himself. At the summit he found that, instead of the cliff being a sheer pinnacle spiking abruptly out of the plain, it was more in the shape of a bisected hummock, cut off by human hands perhaps on purpose to build those cavernous halls. From the top the ground sloped gently away to the normal levels, and in the direction he had approached from, as best he could judge, the land lay flat as a table, densely forested, steaming with moisture, the counterpart of the riverlands.

All around, as far as he could see, the tremendous forest extended, half-drowned after the terrific rains of the night. Nowhere could he see either rise or hollow, except such as were formed by the varying height of trees; nothing to guide him to the river, or back to the place he had left his men in.

Neither could he detect any signs of human life. The great jungle seemed dead, drowned; only in the tree-tops was there any life at all, where hosts of birds, from perky parrakeets to lordly paradise birds preened their draggled plumage and announced to the world their disapproval of Nature's methods.

"There's something, though!" the skipper cried aloud, hunger making his eyes keen.

He saw a wild boar, lying in a tangle of sodden fern under a tree which had been robbed of many branches during the storm. There was one match left, the way home might be a day's march, and he had not eaten anything for fourteen hours. Making sure his pistol was charged, he crept cautiously toward the recumbent pig. It did not move. He reached it, stirred it with his foot, not caring to slaughter it asleep, even though necessity bade him make sure of his meal. Piggy stayed where he lay.

"The blooming swine's dead!" muttered Saunders, and lifted it by two legs.

Then he swore, and dropped the boar, glancing around alertly. The pig was swollen, and discolored, with something more than the swelling and discoloration of drowning or blows from falling tree limbs. A slender arrow stuck in the bristly shoulder, and the bloated flesh spoke of poison as plainly as tongue would speak. Poisoned arrows meant natives, with more poisoned arrows and consummate forest craft.

Turning back, Saunders tried to recall any such gentle rise as the hummock might appear to be from the river, if visible. He could remember nothing in the entire course of the river, from the estuary to where the

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schooner grounded, that rose to the tree-top level. All was flat, water-logged forest and mangrove swamp except when the river had run low just before the rain, when each bank seemed to rise higher and dry.

"Here goes for a blind shot," he decided, and setting his course by pocket compass he entered the rank, oppressive jungle again.

For half an hour he struggled on, hunger gnawing fiercely at his bowels, thirst beginning to add its torments as the sun rose higher and made of the dense wet bush a steaming, stinking horror. He paused in a narrow aisle of the forest, where overhead he could see the blue Papuan sky, and stood awhile with his helmet off, rumpling his red curls, reviewing his situation. The river seemed farther off than ever.

"If only I could hit a bird with a pistol shot," he muttered, peering into the trees.

His ammunition was not so plentiful that he could afford to waste much, with poisoned arrows in mind. But he was very hungry, and he gazed longingly up at a fat jungle fowl perched just about as high up as his bullet could reach with even a prospect of fair success. He jiggled the safety of his pistol up and down uncertainly, his hunger no stronger than his shrewdness. Then above his head, coming from right to left, burst out an appalling chorus of raucous squawks, and a whistling of wings, with a shadow falling fairly upon his own as he stood.

"Glory!" he yelled, and fired right into the thick of a flock of thousands of pigeons, jungle cocks, and river fowl. It was impossible for even a single bullet to miss in such a pack. Two birds fell at his feet, a pigeon and a hideous red-necked cock; another, a water-fowl which he greatly coveted in preference to the others, pitched over and fell far out of reach in the trees.

He seized the pigeon, started a fire with his last match after a tedious search for dry material, and plucked and cleaned the bird while the fire burned up. As he ate the fat, juicy meat, he smiled almost happily in the knowledge that the water-fowl he had seen in that flock must certainly have been flying not far from the river. He cleaned the last of the bones and got up, setting his face fair in the direction from which the birds had come, more certain of his direction than he had been since first deciding that he was lost in the jungle.

The one thing that marred his happiness and caused his brow to lower was the thing which he took from his pocket as he walked, the thing he had snatched up in that last moment within the rock cavern—a well blackened, charred, mellow briar pipe.

He chewed on a cheroot as he marched, for his last match had gone in making fire, and his hunger had caused him to let the fire die while eating, forgetting tobacco altogether; but as he chewed he turned the pipe over and peered at it for marks, smelled of the bowl, trying to determine whether it had been smoked recently or long ago, battling with a thought that insistently recurred, a thought which he cast aside as too horrible for consideration, but which always came back to assail him.

"It can't be!" he decided, and put the thing in his pocket in order that he might definitely flout that thought. "Hundreds of pipes like it. Shan't believe it, anyhow. Too rotten!"

But he took out the pipe again several times before at length he stumbled through a knee-deep swamp into a clump of slimy mangroves and emerged suddenly upon the river brink. Up and down stream he looked, seeking his schooner. The land about him was unfamiliar, but that might be expected after such an upheaval of forces as had passed over the land in the night. He took out his whistle to sound a call; when, far away down stream, clear and musical on the still air, came the sound of a windlass clanking and pawls taking hold.

"Can't be another craft with that windlass note!" he grinned, and tightened his belt.

He had no intention of braving that awful forest again, and the schooner lay down stream. Scanning the shores for lurking creatures that might make his venture perilous, he made one long run and struck straight out into midstream where the current ran strongly and plenty of débris ran with it, so that he might take breath, if he needed it by hanging to a tree-limb.

IN TWENTY minutes he gripped the cable of the schooner, now swinging to anchor in midstream, and hauled himself over the bows. Amidships old Tod Carter was mustering the entire crew, and with him stood Oopdyke, scowling blackly toward the forest, and Jacky, with Horatius, both of their black faces working ferociously as the mate snapped orders.

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The skipper crouched out of sight until he heard what was going on; then, apprised of the fact that he was lost, in a hostile country, and every man except two ship-keepers was about to set out to get him and not to return until they had got him, he stepped down off the low topgallant forecastle and stalked into their midst, dripping, disheveled, but smiling as sunnily as ever.

"Where's Venneker?" he asked, as if he saw nothing unusual about the schooner's mustering crew.

Tod Carter grunted hopelessly. Not all the years of his association with the red-headed skipper could wean him of wonderment each time Saunders appeared from some unholy adventure as cool as if he had but come from a pleasant bath.

"Below; crazy!" was Carter's retort.

"H'm! Not very crazy, is he? Quiet enough. Where's the young idiot, Moncrief?"

"He stayed back there in the village. Wouldn't desert his people, he said. Guess he's in Heaven now and his bones picked clean."

"—— young lunatic! Might have done some good if he'd come with us. All right, Tod, dismiss the parade, and come down and tell me all about last night when I've changed into dry togs." He sought out the cook, and handed him the pipe he had found.

"Cook, dry this in the oven, but look out you don't cook it. Gently dry it, or you'll melt the stem. Bring it down soon as you can."

He walked aft to the cabin, leaving a pleased crowd, but a crowd of mingled emotions behind him.

"Vell, dot's der varmest I effer heard, py Chiminy!" grunted Oopdyke, staring after Saunders pop-eyed. "Det, und comes to life again, oop from der vater comes he mit a grin, und a schmile, und nefer hullow, kiss me py der foot, or not'ing. Only cook, dry me mine old pipe, py der horns ouf der parson's goat!"

The crew of happy Islanders said little, but they leaped and tumbled over each other about the decks, thumping each other lustily on back and breast, smiling with sheer, genuine thankfulness at their skipper's return.

As for Jacky and Horatius, they glared into each other's black faces, glared as if each challenged the other to show anything but the deepest awe, then shared a stick of tobacco and stood watch beside the cabin doors, utterly and forever convinced that the skipper needed no show of paltry magic to prove his supernatural powers, sure that his every action, his every waking and sleeping hour was governed and guided by witchcraft such as their own home wise men had never even dared to suggest in their wildest moments of frenzy.

Tod went down and told about the adventures of the night while Saunders ate a real breakfast to give him an appetite for the noon meal about due. Even Long and his men could pick up no track in that water-logged jungle. All they could do, after hours of seeking in circles, was to guide the party back to the river, where they found Tod and his remaining crew hard at work getting the schooner out of the middle of a swamp where the rising storm had put her.

Their appearance had provided the needed extra help, and just when the skipper appeared, like Triton crowned with weeds, they had floated the schooner in mid-river, and were about to set out, fully armed and provisioned, to get him or get his bones and avenge them.

"And where you got to, and why you drifted off like they said you did, beats me," growled Tod, disdaining to put the query but nevertheless on thorns to know. "Always up to some gaudy bit o' dum foolishness, be dummed if you ain't. S'pose you chased a army o' cannibals single-handed, or somethin' ekally humorsome."

"No, Tod, I went to get a pipe," replied the skipper with a placid grin. "Where's old Long? I'd like to see him."

"Blast yer jokes, cap'n!" roared Tod, stamping to the stairs in red-faced anger. "Get a pipe! A pipe in th' blessed jungle at midnight! And where's Long, says you! —— blast sech a man anyhow. Set there, wi' yer mouth shet, and I'll send Long to yuh! A pipe, ——!"

Tod's outburst was the only means he permitted himself of showing his deep gratification at his skipper's return. The skipper knew it, and smiled affectionately after the grim old chap. Then, taking up the pipe which the cook brought him, he held it as a smoker would, and stepped into Venneker's cabin, calling him by name.

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CHAPTER XIX

BALDWIN CAUSES AN EXODUS

SAUNDERS stood at the bunk side, staring accusingly down at the recumbent figure. He called Venneker's name again, more sharply, and raised the pipe halfway to his lips. The little cabin was cool and dim; a gentle air entered by the port, guided by a tin wind-scoop, and the double awnings over the half-poop ensured both soft light and as much air as could be captured; yet Venneker sweated as if in a Turkish bath.

He lay motionless, with breast barely moving, and his hands lay white and nerveless against his side; his face was the face of a sapped, bloodless thing, his luxuriant hair was plastered upon his forehead with sweat; the bed he lay on was like a waterbed that had burst.

"Venneker!"

Saunders uttered the name once more harshly, and faintly the man's eyelids fluttered, half opened, and closed wearily, finally. The skipper took up one white hand and felt the feeble pulse. Then he put the brier pipe in his pocket with a muttered curse, and left the cabin, closing the door gently. Outside the door he found Oopdyke and Long waiting.

"Hullo, Long," he grinned with an effort. "I wanted to get your chaps——"

He turned to Oopdyke as the Papuan stared open-mouthed.

"Interpret, Oopdyke," he said. "Want you and your men to come see something I've found, but I don't know about it now. Wait. Say, Oopdyke, Venneker's no more crazy at this minute than you or me, but he's a mighty sick man. Don't want to hinder you, old fellow, but I think I'll have to carry him back to the coast."

The Dutchman glanced at the old savage, then at Saunders, who nodded understandingly. At a word from Oopdyke old Long trotted on deck, and the skipper led the way into his own state-room.

"Well?" he hinted.

"Don't do it, captain," said Oopdyke, seriously. "Jou ain't forgetting dot Paldvin feller——"

"Oh, blast it! I had forgotten him," the skipper exclaimed, swinging around abruptly from the cabinet in which he was rummaging for a black bottle and glasses. "Where is the blighter?"

"Dot's vot I come to tell jou. Dere ain't not'ing for jou to be scared apoud, perhaps, but Venneker——"

"Oh, —— it! Cut out all the cackle and come down to short tacks!"

"Vell—" the stolid Dutchman went on as placidly as ever—"dot Venneker talked in his delirium, und Paldvin heard—" he wagged a huge finger at the fuming skipper. "Paldvin heard vot he said, so off he vent. *Ja, ja*, yoost von minute, impatience. Paldvin's gone to try to find a government party vot iss apoud to establish a government station somevhere along der south bank near der bend, und——"

"And means to bring 'em here to collar me? By Jupiter, if he stops me taking old Venneker down to be taken care of, I'll——"

"*Ja*, I know. I'd hellup jou, too. But dis ain't not'ing concerning jou, captain. Venneker talked in his schleep, und he rafed apoud der way he killed Koesch, und Paldvin——"

"*He?*" snapped Saunders, fiercely glaring down into the blue eyes of Oopdyke sitting on the settee with a glass of schnapps in an unshaken hand. "Venneker?"

"*Ja*. Und Paldvin——"

"Baldwin means to arrest a man as sick as old Venneker is, and take——"

Saunders stopped abruptly and strode out of the cabin.

"Come on deck!" he called back, and summoned Tod Carter from the bows, where the indefatigable old mate was fussing with his moorings.

"Carter! Have Long get his men aboard right away, leaving a couple of his best bushmen to keep abreast of us and look out. Get under weigh as soon as you can——"

"Ain't goin' to make much progress against this stream wi' this breeze——"

"Do as you're told!" snapped Saunders, and old Tod started as if shot. Not often had that tone been used to him.

"Mr. Baldwin's—" he stammered, flustered.

"—— Baldwin!" roared Saunders, stamping on the deck in an extremely rare exhibition of passion.

Every member of his cheery crew turned to stare wonderingly at him, and he swiftly took hold of himself as Oopdyke joined him. Laughing shortly, he repeated his orders in something nearer his habitual voice, and informed Carter that Baldwin was gone on

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his own business, and they would not wait for him.

When such awnings as interfered with the handling of the schooner had been furled, and the cable singled and hove short, he left the deck to Oopdyke and returned to Venneker. From his own room he brought his well-thumbed book of medicine, and sat beside the bunk reading and scanning the sick man from time to time as he tried to identify every phase of his trouble.

The change in the man was astounding, even allowing for the reaction after his plunge into the most shameful savagery of all— white man's savagery. Gone was every spark of insanity, gone all evil cunning. In that pallid face lurked no trace of drunken cruelty, but only the pitiful helplessness of a strong man sapped of all vitality.

The skipper laid down his book, shaking his head. Laying a hand on Venneker's heart, he noted the irregular beat and turned to the book again, seeking for some instruction which would justify him in administering a stimulating drug. It was almost inconceivable that such a change could have taken place in such a brief interval; yet there lay the evidence, the living fact. And this was a man he had once known as a fellow student, a clean, legitimate rival in athletic sports, one of his own kind, his own class. True, their most recent renewal of acquaintance had hardly been of a nature to resurrect good feelings, but——"

"—— it! He can't go out like this!" growled the skipper desperately, flinging down his book again.

Fetching his hypodermic case, he selected a charge for his syringe, thrust the needle under the muscles of the sick man's chest, and pushed the plunger home.

Picking up the book, and slipping the case in his pocket, he felt the brier pipe there. Cursing softly, he let his eyes rove about the little cabin, which Venneker had occupied whenever he had lived or slept on board; and suddenly he stepped over and took a well-seasoned brier pipe from the rack over the bunk. Once more he laid down his medical book, took out the pipe from his pocket, and grimly compared it with that one from the rack.

For several minutes he gazed at the two charred, ragged-edged bowls, at the mark of the maker, at the hard-bitten stems. Then, with a hard line at his mouth, and a burning glance in his gray eyes, he replaced the pipe in the rack, gently held the port curtain aside, and flung the other pipe into the muddy, fast-running river.

"That ends that, if it rests with me!" he said bitterly, and softly returned to his own room to think over the terrible thing he had verified.

"Where is it all leading to?" he muttered, glaring moodily at the closed door opposite. "Drunken beater-up of natives—— Well, that's cured, perhaps. Murderer—— ——! What's the use of believing a delirious man's ravings? But a cannibal! By the Lord, I won't believe it!"

He forced himself to think that the pipe he had found in that rock chamber, that series of chambers so palpably built and apportioned for the exercise of cannibal orgies, had been given away by Venneker, or stolen, perhaps. So must have been that plaid steamer-rug. There could be no doubt about either; there should not be. What though the closest scrutiny of those bitten pipe-stems failed to reveal one tiny difference in the way they were bitten. Could not two men possess teeth of identical cast?

"Surely they could! Certainly they did!" he growled as he went on deck, scowling darkly, in no mood for companionship, deliberately crossing the deck to avoid Oopdyke who stepped forward to meet him full of some news.

THE schooner had lost much ground in getting up her anchor before her sails gave her power enough to offset the heavy current; but now she bravely stemmed the stream, her great sailing qualities brought out to the utmost by grizzled old Tod Carter, who stood like a wooden image at the wheel, and as she rounded a slight curve, entering a wider reach of the river, bringing the wind more aft, she gained speed and began to throw off a creaming wave from her sharp stem.

Oopdyke glanced at the skipper sharply, and moved as if to follow him; but Saunders gave heed to nobody once he had seen that his vessel was well under command, until he caught sight of Jacky in the crowded waist. Long and all but two of his savages were there.

"Jacky!"

Jacky started at the word, which was like

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the snap of a whip, and hurried aft, coming through his black comrades like a launch through a sea of ink, his wide open eyes shining like lamps.

"Jacky, you go stay along Venneker all time, see? All day you sit. All night one of my boys sit. I come in every five minutes to see, and if you leave him, or shut your eyes, I'll chuck you over to the eels, sabbee?"

Jacky sabbee'd to the extent that he had vanished below while the skipper was yet speaking. Then Oopdyke approached, his impatience beginning to show even through his Dutch stolidness.

"Look, if jou von't lissten!" he said curtly, flinging out a long arm and pointing far down stream.

The schooner negotiated the last of the curve and entered on a straight, wide bit of river hemmed in by low, reeking mangrove swamps, which in turn were backed by impenetrable forest that seemed to swell upward merely to the height of the trees, and to have no break.

Astern, where the Dutchman pointed, however, there had been a space of high bank, with trees that grew in earth and not out of the water; and just at the extreme tip of the beginning of the swampy ground, where the turn was sharpest, a steam launch shot into view, hugging the northern bank closely as if to cut off distance. But she came no farther then, for the swift current swung her nose aside, she had no room to stand off, and her stem buried itself in the tenacious mud and tangled roots of the mangroves.

"I see!" grinned Saunders, meeting Oopdyke's eye and regaining some of his good humor at sight of him.

"Vell, ouf all der plessed luck!" ejaculated the Dutchman, slapping his thigh noisely with a huge, colloused palm. "Der natifes pelieve jou have der Evil Eye, und, py Chiminy, I pelieve it too! Vot do jou vear? Some vears a caul, und some vears dried heads——"

"Old Long sent me three. Perhaps they worked this time."

"Der —— mit der joking," growled Oopdyke, irritably. "Look at der launch, und say it ain't unhuman luck!"

"Not luck," smiled the skipper, entirely recovered from his gloomy humor at sight of the Dutchman's puzzlement. "Don't call it altogether luck. I chucked an old pipe overboard back there. I expect the pilot tried to get it, and ran himself hard aground."

"A oldt pipe!"

In spite of his annoyance Oopdyke's big red face wore a broad grin.

"Den maybe dod vos your lucky vun, und now you've ditched him. Say, how many times did jou hit der mud coming oop? Twice, vasn't it? Vell, der steamer ouf der missionaries, vot draws only half so much vater as this schooner, hit der —— bottom twenty-fife times in half der distance py chiminy! Und jou say it aind't luck?"

"How irritating for the sky-pilots," smiled Saunders. "They ought really to remember that the way into Papua isn't exactly the way into heaven, and take a river pilot with them. Very foolish of them."

"Go to der ——!" grunted Oopdyke, and went to light his reeking pipe at the galley fire.

CHAPTER XX

OOPDYKE DEPARTS

IN TWO weeks the intermittent rain that had fallen since that bad night of storm in the forest ceased. By favor of gracious winds, coupled with herculean efforts in towing on the part of Long's lusty savages, the *Black Pearl* had in that time reached the junction of the Strickland River and never once did the government launch pop up astern. Now the water began to shoal as the river level dropped, and Oopdyke announced that he must betake himself off.

"I haf mine work to do, captain," he said, a hard glitter coming into his blue eyes for an instant. "Land me on der vest bank ouf der Strickland, und in a veek or so I meet mit mine people vot expect me. Der schooner vill float further a long vay before der vater falls too much. Make vay as far as she vill carry jou, Ret, den schtick her oud ouf sight in some creek vith half a dozen ouf a guard. Dere's a deep creek apoud here——"

He laid a huge forefinger on the river chart. It was an imperfect chart, but, with the additions drawn in by the Dutchman, it seemed almost perfect.

"Dere, peyond der big bend. She may lay dere a year und nopody efer see her. Den you can take old Long und go oop py vay ouf Donaldson Mountain, vhich aind't far

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from vhere der poundaries ouf Shermany und Holland und England meet. I shall be thereabouds, for it's dere dot der plessed Shermans are trying to mofe our line vest, und your line south. Dere's gold dere, und diamonts. Vasn't it in der Victor Emmanuel Mountains jou took oop land?"

"Yes, but old chief Nuanou's territory is in the great forest north of the mountains, isn't it? Besides, about those lines, a lot of men can't pick up a boundary line and just shift it so many miles and lay it down again, y'know. Anyway, boundaries are not in my line."

"Dey vill be," returned Oopdyke quietly. "Jou find oldt Nuanou, und den jou'll find dot he's der mainspring ouf der line-shifting pizness, for if der line maybe aind't drawn on der map, exactly, suppose a Hollander, or a Englisher, or anypody not Sherman goes to seek gold or stones oop dere, down comes Nuanou mit all his savitches und says 'Stop!' Dere aind't no savitches like dem in der whole worldt, mine frient. Dere's t'ousands ouf dem, und dey aind't yet learned dot der vhite man is so terrible. Der Shermans are seeking to buy him instead ouf frightening him to death, contrary to dere usual vay. Neuman was oop dere trying to see him und tell him dot efery nation but Shermany is after his treasure, und Shermany is looking after his interests."

"But my land is there, and I have Koesch's official——"

"Pouff! Official foot, mit dese affairs! Besides, aind't Koesch dead? Und who shall support jou ven jou produce dem papers in der vilderness?"

"I'll support myself," returned Saunders grimly. "Anyway, it's the old chap's gaudy chair and stool I want to see. If it isn't worth carting away I'll let him keep it and prospect for the gold and diamonds."

"But dey aind't in dot territory," insisted Oopdyke with a trace of petulance. "Aind't I told jou der rich stuff lies apoud der poundaries? Und most ouf it is on jour side und mine—I mean British und Holland territory. Oh, go ahet, jou obstinate mule! I'll be somevhere handy vhen jou arrife. Gif me a boat."

For many days after the big Hollander vanished into the seemingly impassable jungle west of the Strickland's mouth, the schooner proceeded slowly or swiftly, according to breeze, stream, and depth of water. On the fifth day after resuming the voyage, as night fell, Saunders spied a tiny eruption far astern, and knew by long experience that it came from the smokestack of one of the old pattern Navy steam launches. That government party whose aid Baldwin had sought traveled in such a craft.

"Hold on with that anchor, Tod!" he ordered. "Tell the towing party to carry on."

"Want to stick us up into the jungle?" grumbled Carter, even his keen old eyes unable to discern the river's course for a hundred yards ahead, with the range decreasing every moment as twilight changed to darkness.

"Perhaps," returned Saunders. "Anyway, carry on as I say. Better chance tangling up with the jungle than with a certain party I just made out down the river. It isn't your neck they want to measure for a hemp collar, Tod."

Carter jumped at the suggestion, and soon the towline was taut again and the schooner moving forward into blackness almost tangible. His last view of the river, taken from the masthead as the sun rimmed the forest crests, had showed the skipper a reach of considerable length with but the slightest of irregularities. He decided to take a chance, hoping and expecting that the launch, being government controlled, would never dare to run at night in an uncharted river, and that her commander, aside from Baldwin, would find his wits not sharp enough to cut the red tape of his orders.

His remark to Carter concerning that hempen necktie had a hidden meaning so far as the mate was concerned, for old Tod had no idea about Venneker's delirious confession. So he was utterly devoted to the difficult task of carrying the schooner forward in his captain's interests; Saunders, on his part, was determined that so long as he could stir a hand or command a man no government in the world should lay a menacing hand upon Venneker.

He called softly through the skylight and asked Jacky if the sick man were asleep. Venneker himself answered, weakly, but quite sanely:

"Can't sleep. Got a touch of pink things again, Saunders. Can't I come on deck?"

It was contrary to the treatment he had decided upon to let his patient breathe the raw night air on deck; but that launch had

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aroused a great, tender pity in the big skipper's breast, and he told Jacky and Tomba to carry Venneker up in his bedclothes.

Jacky appeared alone, carrying the sick man as a woman might carry a ten-year-old child.

"Here, on the skylight," the skipper said, flinging open a roll of bedding which he had used during the afternoon.

Venneker, in health, was a slightly bigger man than Saunders. His height had not diminished now, but his frame and face, arms and legs, were those of a skeleton almost, his eyes burned darkly in deep sockets like the eye-cavities of a skull.

There was no gleam of light under the awning, no telltale sign to encourage that launch to start again. The binnacle needed no light, for the helmsman steered blindly by ear, obeying the softly spoken directions of the mate hidden in the gloom of the bows, who in turn followed the trend of the towline, for he couldn't see the boat.

Saunders stooped over his patient, whose fluttering breathing, faint though it was, could be clearly heard in the silence of the night. Even the forest creatures appeared to have hushed their nocturnal chorus in sympathy with the black, noiseless schooner slipping past. The boat oars were muffled, too. They made no sound. Venneker's thin, cold hand sought and gripped the skipper's with pitiful weakness.

"I heard you tell Carter about a hemp collar, Saunders," he said with a ghastly attempt at a chuckle. "Don't fret, old boy; I won't let 'em hang you. Too good an old scout to let hang, you are."

The skipper clenched his teeth tightly, wondering if the man did not know that he had made that confession, or whether this was simply a returning phase of his shameful downfall, and he was indulging in such a piece of sarcasm as was devilish in one in his condition.

"Good scout, Red," Venneker went on, panting painfully but speaking entirely lucidly. "Shan't forget it. Bally wreck I made of myself, didn't I? Robert Nugent Venneker, educated and intended for big things. Item: Booze. Item: Booze. Item: Dope. Item: Booze and Dope together. Item: Chumming with savages, and becoming one of 'em. Item: Eating——"

"That's enough, now," Saunders checked him softly but with grim determination to prevent any further revelations until the man was well enough to govern himself. He jibbed at what he felt sure was now coming, so tried to stop it in time.

"Item," pursued Venneker, petulantly putting the hand on his lips aside. "Item: Dealing with Koesch, and then——"

"I'll take you below, old man," snapped Saunders angrily. "The night air's making your head light and filling it with miasma."

"Don't!" pleaded Venneker piteously. "Don't clap me down in that stuffy hole again. I promise I won't utter another bally syllable, but don't send me down."

"Look out, then. I'm the doctor, for want of a better, and I allow no breaking of rules. Lie still, and chat if you want to, but leave yourself out of it."

Venneker again uttered that ghastly fantom of a chuckle.

"Unsavory subject, what? Right oh! Does your treatment include absolute deprivation of liquor, doctor? I saw a lot of pink turtles on the cabin wall, absolutely, Red. Can't I have just one little snort to settle my jangled nerves? Give you word of honor I won't ask for another."

Without replying the skipper went below and poured a big peg of brandy, then took it into his own cabin and opened the medicine chest. He carried up a water chattie, and poised the water over the tumbler as he offered it to Venneker.

"Blast the water!" the man snarled, took the glass in trembling fingers, and gulped it down at a draft.

The glass dropped on the deck without breaking, and Venneker fell back with a sigh of bliss.

He lay for several minutes without speaking, while Saunders stood over him with the retrieved glass and the water bottle. He had administered a powerful sleeping potion in the liquor, and was uncertain what effect it might have on a man so completely wrecked. Presently Venneker groped for his hand again, and finding it, muttered drowsily:

"Good old scout. Fine doctor. Feel glorious, Red. Must build up now you've cured me. Got a lot to do up yonder. One thing I must do is to get square with you, you —— old scoundrel."

"Thinking of that spanking?" smiled Saunders, satisfied now that he had not overdone the dose.

"Yes—that—spanking——"

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Venneker ceased, and sank into a deep, calm sleep while the *Black Pearl* sailed steadily on in the blackness.

CHAPTER XXI

STRIKE FOR THE LINE

TOWARD dawn Saunders detected what appeared to be a break in the forest blackness to starboard. Bidding the helmsman steer nearer, he called for the sharpest eyes to try to pick out the fancied opening. Old Long, ahead in the boat, flogging his tireless savages to tremendous efforts, yelled back that the schooner was not following the tow and would get aground on a low mud spit that jutted out right ahead of the boat.

"That sounds like the place!" cried the skipper as soon as the report was interpreted. "Can't you see anything, boys? No opening?"

"No opening, but the trees look lower," Tod Carter hailed presently.

"Tell the boat to 'vast towing a bit. Shout the minute one of you can see clearly. I believe we go in here."

Swiftly the jungle turned from black to slate, and to blue and morning purple with fast coming day. Right abreast of the schooner a dense mangrove swamp stretched far into the stream, and fifty yards upstream a slim, low mud-bank extended one-third across the river. Between mud-bank and the farther river bank the stream swirled furiously in the suddenly restricted channel. As for the creek mentioned by Oopdyke, that seemed to be a fine bit of imagination.

Yet the mud spit was there, the mangroves were there, the forest had the appearance from the river of sinking into a short saddleback hollow. There seemed scarcely room for a rowboat to pass that mud spit; for the schooner to enter seemed utterly impossible.

"He said go in boldly," mused Saunders, poring over the rough chart embellished by the penciled hieroglyphics of the big Dutchman.

Taking bearings from the chart and memorizing them, he went on deck and checked off the bearings of various objects on shore. Once satisfied, he merely swept one all-seeing glance around and ordered sharply:

"Carter! Tell 'em to carry that towline on to the spit and make it fast with the boat's anchor in the mud. Then bring the boat in for lines. Get two hawsers ready. We go in here."

With the towline carried aft to prevent the schooner from swinging downstream into the mangroves, and a hawser out from each bow hitched to trees on either side of the apparently impossible creek, the *Black Pearl* was worked patiently and cunningly into the narrow passage, through which deep black water swirled sluggishly.

"Must be the drainin' of a swamp as big as half Papua by the stink!" grumbled Carter, holding his nose in exaggerated horror.

The passage of the vessel stirred up long dormant possibilities in the way of aromas as she brushed first the mangroves on one side and then the mud-bank on the other; but she kept moving forward, and her keel never once touched, though even Saunders, full of astonishing experiences as he was, peered over the stern in wonder. No sailor would ever think of looking for a deep-water channel in such water, with such surroundings.

Suddenly the jibboom swept over the mud-bank, and the stem seemed to touch; then on the opposite side of the creek entrance the real creek opened, a wide, densely overhung basin in which a dozen schooners such as the *Black Pearl* might have been hidden around its shores, behind that matted screen of hanging vines.

"Let go the line on the spit!" roared the skipper, easy at last. "Slack up that port-bow line! Haul away on the other, Tod, and have the boat carry out the towline to that sago palm."

With such a crew, and such auxiliaries as Long's half hundred men, the schooner was snugly moored and half concealed behind vines and branches in an hour. A keen-eyed lookout was perched aloft in a tall tree, to watch for the steam launch; and the skipper was busily engaged tying together some empty boxes handed up to him by Tomba from the store-room.

"Come on, Jacky," he said, when three bundles were made. "Bring Horatius, and follow me."

STRIKING off up-river beyond the mud spit, he reached a point a mile farther on and sat down to wait until Jacky, at the crest of the tallest tree at hand, should receive a signal from that

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other lookout down by the creek. From one of the boxes he took food and sent Jacky's share up to him by Horatius. It was the only breakfast they would get, and they might have to wait some time before the launch appeared. But in this case, either the commander was a man of unusual energy, or Baldwin was able to urge him on; for when they had waited less than an hour the lookout signaled the boat in sight coming fast up the river, and Jacky slipped down the tree in haste.

"Quick, then!" snapped Saunders, distributing his empty boxes. "Chuck 'em well out so the stream will get hold of 'em."

In a few minutes the stream bore upon its greasy bosom salmon cases and condensed milk boxes, an empty bread tin and a box that had contained smoked herrings; all sailing bravely down the river to provide a clew and a hot scent to the launch that was seeking the very craft those stores empties came from.

"Now we'll look-see, hey, Jacky? You sabbee game?"

"Ho, yis!" grinned Jacky, and his face seemed almost split in two halves as he caught on to the notion and communicated the news to Horatius.

The launch was just coming abreast of the creek when Saunders got back and hid with his two men behind a wide pandanus. The blue-goggled figures by the wheel appeared to be disputing; one, obviously Baldwin, pointed up-river impatiently; the other, perhaps the commander of the launch, appeared to want to investigate that uncharted creek. Presently a salmon case floated through the narrows between mud-bank and shore, and bumped against the launch.

"There!" cried Baldwin, eagerly. "They've dumped their garbage and given themselves away! I always believed this chap Red Saunders was overrated. See, there are more coming!"

A herring box and a milk case careered through and jostled against the launch; the blue-goggled man at the wheel signaled to his engineer for more speed, and the launch sped through the narrows and stormed furiously up-stream, with her men already getting out rifles from the damp-proof cases.

The day was spent in preparations for leaving the schooner. Her screen was perfected until even her own crew failed to name the particular tree which marked bow, or stern. Weed grown logs were uprooted out of the recesses of the innermost swamp and cunningly moored around the black waterline of the ship, then more mossy, weedy, parasites of every water loving kind were floated so that they must become entangled with the logs or their lines. After the entrance had been similarly blocked with most natural looking obstacles, to discourage that launch peeping in on her disgruntled way back, the deficit on the previous night's sleep was made up against a stern morrow.

Early in the morning Long's two scouts appeared on the river bank out of a thick miasmatic mist. They reported having seen many devastated villages and single husbandmen's huts along the river belt through which they had followed the course of the party, and told of rumors of something dire and terrible that followed in the wake of a strange band of northern Papuans, warpainted and ravenous.

"Dey strike fo' de no'the, sar," Jacky interpreted when the spokesman finished.

"What are they?" Saunders was reminded of that yellow face with the cruel gash of a mouth, and the painted savages he had seen for one brief second in the blaze of a lightning flash.

"Dey man-eaters from up dere," replied Jacky, pointing far over the trees as if to indicate mountains in the north. "Him say dey got leader, too, not like dem."

"Ask him to tell what he was like. Or, better, ask him if he's anything like this."

The skipper rapidly presented Jacky with a terse word picture, and Jacky's eyes goggled. He recognized the Arab from the lucid description, and started to say so.

"Ask him!" snapped Saunders, tersely, and Jacky did so.

"Him say yes," announced Jacky, and fear crept into his black face.

Saunders laughed harshly.

"All right. Now we know who to look out for, though —— my rags if I know what he's after. Say, Carter! Better make the ship-guard twelve instead of six. Mix up some of Long's cannibals with our men."

"That's all very well, skipper," grumbled old Tod, scratching his grizzled head in perplexity. "You just stand aft and say, pick out six boys to stand by, and leave it to me to do. You come and try to persuade any of our boys to stay behind when you're

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on the march. They're almost ready to mutiny now, by cripes!"'

The skipper smiled gently. He knew quite well that this trouble was always at hand whenever he wanted his crew to stay out of a frolic. He stepped down to the main-deck.

"See here, boys, somebody's got to stay here to look after that launch when it comes back," he said quietly. "There's Jerry. He isn't fit to march, but he can fight from the ship, can't you, Jerry? Then old Tomba's too old to run, but he's a whale in a scrap, aren't you, Tomba? Well, that's two, see Tod? It's easy."

"Easy for your blandandherin' tongue!" snorted Tod, and glared in wonder at the flattered, happy resignation on the faces of Tomba and Jerry. "Let her go, then. Hey, Jerry, pick out four more to stay with you, since the skipper's put you in command."

"Hurry, too," put in Saunders, more seriously. "It's a —— of a long march, and we have to carry Venneker in a sling litter every step of the way. Can't leave him here in this swamp. The boys could never handle him if he busted loose again."

It was noon before all was ready, and the column formed, fifty strong, loaded down with packs of stores, medicines, arms and prospecting and bartering gear. Venneker was swung in a grass hammock on a single pole resting on the brawny shoulders of two of Long's men, with two other pairs of men excused from bearing packs, waiting to take turn and turn about at the pole.

Vivid was the memory of that night of storm in the forest as Saunders led, with Long, the awful march through a mid-day, half-drowned forest that steamed and stank, and seemed to roar about them from sheer silence. Impenetrable at times, compelling a long back trail and detour, the forest extended interminably, level as a table, never entirely dry underfoot during the whole of the first three days of struggle.

Ferns reaching twice man height sprang out of rotten black earth and tree débris. Lianas that swung and twined like coach-whip snakes entangled arms and legs and twisted into pack straps; giant pandanus thrust sharp, blade-like fans across faces and hands, preparing a meal for hordes of blood-crazy mosquitoes.

"Got to carry on, boys!" smiled the skipper cheerily when they halted for their third camp. "Can't march here at night, or we would. Can't linger here, either. Venneker won't stand it. As soon as we reach the beginning of the higher ground, Long tells me the forest gets thinner. Then we'll rest in the heat and march in the evening. Cheer up, Tod, you old grouch! Spoiling for a fight?"

"Fightin' 's play to this," growled the old mate, tenderly massaging a bruised ankle and trying to wait with patience until the mosquitoes on his cheek gathered thickly enough for him to smash a hundred or so with one expenditure of effort.

Tod was right. But everything, good or bad, has an end, and three days later the ground was dry, the forest presented an open view, and the crests of mountains could be seen from the tree tops. That day they slept through the heat, and at evening, after supper, tobacco was passed around, pipes lighted, and Saunders got up to start again with the hearty yell:

"Hurrah, boys! Now we strike straight for the line!"

CHAPTER XXII

THE ARAB ATTACKS

ALWAYS along that seemingly endless, trackless route into the Papuan highlands, there was the suggestion of strange company unseen. While the gigantic forest thinned as the altitude increased, and the ground became dry and more sparsely thicketed, even at a thousand feet the land lay in a condition that would be called impenetrable elsewhere.

For a week the party marched by night, until rising elevation brought comparatively cool days, and made daylight progress possible again. Then three times the trail encountered the river they had left, and it was essential that they cross the Strickland before its windings forced them aside into other and more unwelcome digressions.

When the typical vegetation of the Malayan groups changed suddenly to the Australian eucalyptus and rhododendron, and huge Papuan rats were replaced by queer little marsupial beasts like cross-bred opossum-kangaroos, Saunders called a half-day halt to give his men a much needed rest and to satisfy himself regarding the insistent feeling experienced by all hands of somebody keeping pace with the march, near by, out of sight, apparently intangible.

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Old Long had failed in a dozen sorties to discover anybody; Saunders himself, trusting to no man's keen scent in preference to his own, had taken a party of his own crew on a long detour through the jungle and had also failed to detect the presence, or sign of presence, of guardian friends or secret foes. And yet one of Long's savages had vanished during the third day of the march, leaving no trace. A diversion of the entire column, even to Venneker and his bearers, extending twelve miles aside from the line of march and lasting through a whole day and part of a night, only verified the fact that a man had vanished.

"Huh! Y' ain't thought as he might ha' deserted, I s'pose?" grunted old Tod Carter surlily.

There had been a long spell of uneventful days since last the grizzled old mate was in a real scrap, and his temper always suffered with peace.

"I don't believe he deserted," Saunders rejoined, though in no very great certainty.

"Then why ain't we——"

Carter's grumble was cut short in startling fashion by the sudden appearance of a *Black Pearl* seaman, his usually smiling face dark with gloom.

"Dat Parchelly he gone, sar!" the man uttered.

Parchelly was the latest addition to Saunders' crew prior to taking on Jacky and Horatius. The young Timorean had been picked up in an Eastern port, and had attached himself solidly to the skipper out of sheer animal devotion.

"Parchelly?" snapped Saunders, startled.

"Like as not he's been playin' a game all this time!" was the mate's sour comment.

He had strongly protested against taking the little Timorean on board at first.

Saunders laughed unpleasantly.

"Parchelly's played a game, yes," he said. "He's played my game, our game. Bite that snarling tongue, Tod, before you say what you'll regret. You know well enough Parchelly's no crook. Come with me and round up all hands. This has got to stop right here."

No man seemed to know just how or when Parchelly vanished. As the column halted, some went to collect dry sticks for the fires, others grabbled at roots for fresh water—the river still ran muddy and foul, though increasingly often it burbled out through great rocky chasms over a bed of the whitest sand—and still others went out for game to conserve the preserved food supply against greater need.

Parchelly, always the keenest in the search for water, after trying the river again and finding it not yet wholly fresh, had passed through the piles of baggage and impedimenta on his way to lead the water seekers, and had since been seen by neither them nor the others.

When the various parties came in, carrying wood, water, and bunches of furred and feathered things for the pot, Long wore an expression on his black visage that Saunders had never noticed before; besides, half a dozen of his men were not with him.

"Call everybody in," Saunders told him, through Jacky.

"Him say no can do," Jacky answered. "Him say him men no find 'nuf food yit. Bimeby come."

"Tell him I want 'em now!"

Jacky translated, and Long scowled ferociously under his brows at the skipper. Jacky spoke earnestly to the old villain, and presently the scowl turned into an uneasy grimace. Reluctantly Long turned to the forest again and disappeared, returned in ten minutes with six rebellious blacks behind him, each trying to hide something from the big skipper's keen eye.

Saunders snapped an order to Carter, and, with the word, sprang upon Long, wrenched his arm around to the front, and seized from his tenacious grip a bloody human head, freshly detached from a thick black neck, wearing in death a quaint grin that suited it but imperfectly.

Carter made a similar discovery; and at his order other seamen leaped jubilantly upon Long's men and each produced a grim trophy, dripping red drops down shiny brown skins, to the accompaniment of terrific looks of murderous protest.

"Tell Long I'll show him some black magic if he doesn't make his chaps wipe those scowls off their faces!" Saunders hurriedly told Jacky, sensing a near crisis.

Jacky hastened to obey, and slowly the murderous scowls gave place to more subdued dissatisfaction. Then Saunders examined the heads. There were seven; one for each of the cannibals, and one other, a lighter, smaller head with smooth, straight hair.

"By ——! It's poor Parchelly!" roared Tod Carter, all his grouchiness gone in the

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moment of realizing that a shipmate had come to dire grief. The skipper was already plying Long with fierce questions through Jacky.

"Him say him see man kill Parchelly wid big spear, and den him go and kill dem mans," Jacky explained.

"Come on. Tell him to lead!" snapped Saunders, snatching up his weapons and urging Long to start.

"Him say him kill all mans," said Jacky. "No more got left."

"Ask him if he wants me to hang his spirit up on that big tree while his body stays here looking at it die!"

Long started without a word, his men huddled at his heels in frank fear. At an outcropping shoulder of a granite mountain the old guide paused uneasily, and it was a *Black Pearl* seaman who darted into a barren ravine and yelled his discovery, bringing up the rest at a dead run.

AMONG the colossal boulders of a tremendous bit of Nature's wreckage, relic of some past upheaval of a mountain, two great piles of firewood were cunningly stacked ready for lighting; and over one pile three bodies hung on green poles, bound in fresh withes, all ready for roasting; on the other turnspit four long pigs awaited the arrival of the chef. With a growl of anger the skipper leaped forward and instantly identified Parchelly by his lighter skin. He turned in towering rage upon Long, who stood half in sheepish repentance, half in bold protest. Even Jacky, weaned from cannibal tastes according to his own confession, waited to interpret with chattering teeth that nevertheless dripped hungry saliva.

"Tell him I'll hang him and all his crew if he doesn't cut those bodies down and bury them right away!" the skipper rasped.

Jacky fidgeted uneasily.

"Massar," he said for himself, not yet passing on Saunders' order to Long; "Massar, me good boy now; Long good boy too; he all good boy. But it bery bad to say no can eat enemy dat git kill in battle, sar. More better you let him——"

"Blast him, and you, and all eaters of long pig! D'ye think I'll let him eat my Parchelly? Tell him——"

"No eat Parchelly," said Jacky, earnestly. "Ol' Long he make him burn while him and we boys all eat de mans dat kill him. Bery good fo' Parchelly. Yassir! Parchelly he go to good place happy 'cause him enemy dat kill him git eat up while he git cotch up in smoke wid smell ob enemy meat to take wid him to de Big Fella topside."

Saunders grinned in spite of his anger at Jacky's ingenious tale. He was very much against cannibalism; but he knew enough of native nature to know that it's as ill to take the flesh of a foe from a cannibal as it is to take the breeks off of a Highlander; and he was prepared to sink many prejudices rather than lose good allies, so long as the men to be eaten were eaten out of his sight or scent, and were already dead. But he was by no means convinced about the genuineness of that story about Parchelly, and he promptly said so.

"Yis, dat so!" insisted Jacky, earnestly. "Long no take him head. Him take dat from de fat feller ober dere—" pointing out a huge headless savage snugly trussed to a pole. "When start dem fire, sar, Parchelly git him head back, put in him hand, and all go up to Big Fella topside togerrer, sar. Ho, yis! Bery good, sar!"

The skipper was not by any means convinced that he ought to permit this feast to go on. Had it only concerned himself he would have turned his back and let things carry on, for his first, chief, and dearest aim was to get far away over those very mountains in the foot-hills of which that ghastly pyre stood ready for action. But he felt it must be a dangerous precedent to establish, for once permitted, it would be hard to stop the practise even though at a future time white long pigs might be in question. He wavered; and while wavering the thing was decided for him.

First a seaman staggered forward from the ravine entrance bleeding from a broad spear wound in the breast; then shots were heard down at the distant camp; yells punctuated the firing, and an inhuman scream arose above all as if from a throat wrung by agony greater than death.

Saunders sped away with his men at his heels without a word. No speech was needed. Even Long and his cannibals left their precious long pork. Down they pelted, and abruptly burst upon the scene of trouble before reaching the halting place; for without a moment's warning the skipper pitched headlong down a declivity hidden under waist-deep bush, and rolled over and over to the hurrying feet of a tall Arab, a man

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with a yellow face, with a cruel gash of a mouth filled with irregular yellow teeth.

CHAPTER XXIII

FIRST PAYMENT

DODGING a sweeping cut from a long knife in the startled Arab's hand, the skipper leaped to his feet as his men stumbled down after him. The first thing that struck him, once he was on foot with a fair field before him, was that a terrific fight was going on around Venneker, recumbent on his mattress. A solid little ring of his Gilbert Islanders, Venneker's bodyguard, stood stubbornly between the sick man and a horde of frenzied foes, while the Arab was obviously startled by Saunders' abrupt advent out of leading the attack, or at least urging the attackers on.

Venneker's face was white as chalk, his eyes stared in fear, and his lips were drawn back curvelessly over tight shut teeth. All this was seen in a flashing glance before the skipper realized with a jubilant leap of pulses that he at last faced the man who had thrice tried to knife him.

"Into it, bullies!" he yelled. "Mop 'em up, Tod! Give 'em hot stuff; this one's mine!"

Doubt was the predominant expression in the Arab's face. His followers, strange natives from another part of Papua, only needed one sight of the big red-headed skipper tumbling headlong to what seemed certain death, only to spring up smiling to confront their leader, to be suddenly smitten with recollections of those amazing stories they had heard throughout the jungle of this white sailor's magic powers.

Venneker's guard made ground at once, where before they had been sorely pressed. As for the Arab, he uncovered his teeth in a desperate snarl, whirled his blade high, and aimed a cut at Saunders's head intended to once and for all erase that particular member from existence and provide the wielder of the sword with ample evidence of a job well done to carry to his masters, wherever they were.

The skipper might easily have shot his foe. He did not. He kept his pistol ready, but wanted to feel his fingers gripping that withered throat, and see how those yellow fangs could grin while the breath was wheezing painfully through them in extremity. As the blade sang around in a whistling, chopping arc, he stepped back as a boxer gives ground, swiftly, not one inch more than requisite, and the keen steel hissed past his chin.

Before the blow's impetus could be checked, he slid forward, still with the subtle glide of the boxer, caught the Arab by the elbow of his knife-arm from the back, and twisted the weapon free with the hand from which he dropped his pistol to the end of the sling it was attached to.

Cunning met craft then. The wily Arab, realizing that he was in a bad fix, turned right around instead of trying to force his return against that terrific strength behind him. His blade he let go without an attempt to hold it; and almost with the same action as dropped the steel his claw-like fingers flashed to and fastened around the skipper's throat.

Frightened birds squawked in the bushes to the unaccustomed hubbub of men. Old Long's cannibals needed but one look at their foes to recognize in them legitimate banquet material, and even had Saunders been unoccupied himself he could never have stopped the terrific onslaught of his hideous old ally.

Foremost of Long's vanguard were Jacky and Horatius, grinning as they had not grinned since entering the service of the *Black Pearl*. Old Tod Carter spat on his calloused palms once, hitched up his trousers, and plunged into the thick of the scrap around Venneker.

Venneker himself, looking the personification of fear, held a futile revolver in a drooping hand, pulling with pitiful perseverance a trigger which sent shot after shot into the ground through sheer inability to hold up the weapon.

And the Arab's talons were fastened to the skipper's throat.

Joy undiluted shone in Saunders' face as those lean claws compressed upon his throttle and he felt the pressure well held by the clean flesh and steely muscles given him by Nature and improved by the clean life he led. He spoke Arbi very well indeed, and though no other except his opponent heard what he said to the Arab the effect was clear for all to see in two minutes from the initial grapple.

He was relating, while his own powerful hands gripped his foe's neck, the thumbs pressing cruelly into the great nerve beside

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the angle of the jaw, sundry things that had happened down in Finschaven, and later aboard the *Black Pearl* among the Louisiades.

None of it was news to the Arab. Three knife attacks had been made, had failed, and now were to be repaid in one instalment; and swiftly the Arab sensed it, for his own grip seemed only to broaden the smile on that awful, smiling face so close to his own, while those terrible fingers at his own neck must surely be made of steel, driven by some devilish power far greater than man power.

Slowly the skipper increased the pressure of his fingers. He felt the Arab kicking furiously at his legs; one desperate lunge struck his groin and almost paralyzed his nerves for a moment; his own lips set grimly, his eyes glittered, and the will to hasten the last act was strengthened when Venneker's weak, thin voice penetrated to his strained hearing.

"Leave him to me, —— you, Saunders! Leave the blighter to me. He's mine!"

He knew that Venneker had toppled over even as the brave sounding words were uttered. Dimly he saw, through misty eyes, for the Arab's grip was inevitably having effect though slowly, that the general fight was over, and that Long was making half-hearted efforts to prevent his men lopping off heads and starting to make long-pig of their fallen enemies, for all the generous feast awaiting them up in the ravine.

"Do you want to speak, you knifing hound?" he gritted, with his face almost touching the Arab's.

The Arab's face underwent a convulsive change from dawning terror of death to sheer demoniacal bitterness, and he uttered in Arabic a cold defiance, promising speedy hanging to his enemy. The grip on his throat intensified; his vertebra cracked with a sound as of a rotten stick breaking underfoot, and he sank to the ground out of the skipper's fingers, dead.

THE camp was silent that night. Long's men, prevented from adding to their banquet from the fresh supply of dead foes, had taken themselves off to finish what they had so completely begun; and Saunders was trying hard to gather vital matter from the rambling incoherences of Venneker, recovering from his swoon of weakness after a supper which, in his case anyhow, consisted of bird eggs beaten up in brandy.

Only at rare intervals might a distant jubilant howl be heard, always coming from the ravine in the frowning hills.

Why had Venneker, in spite of his weakness, been so insistent that the Arab be left to him? What had been the queer association between men of so different a grade in life? If so eager to meet and have reckoning with the Arab, why had Venneker dived overboard from the schooner, with all the signs of panic, when the would-be killer of the skipper had dived under such favorable conditions to Venneker?

These were the questions puzzling Saunders after two hours of trying to extract lucid conversation from the sick man.

Never yet had the skipper mentioned a word to Venneker of that discovery he had made in the rock chambers in the midst of the drowned forest. If he ever felt irresistibly urged to speak of that ancient brier pipe, it was after that supper succeeding the fight, when, try as he would, he could get no word from the man he had saved over and over again concerning his connection with the Arab, and, earlier, with the cannibals he had swung in with even after being rescued from the very fire itself.

"Look here, Venneker, I've a —— good mind to put you on a raft and set you afloat on the river," the skipper said angrily.

"Why, for the Lord's sake?" drawled Venneker insolently, all his weakness failing to subdue utterly the sarcastic strain in him.

"Why the —— can't you open your confounded trap, and give me something to steer by?"

"Oh, steer as you go, old chap. I believe that's what you bally sailors say, isn't it?" sneered Venneker. "You've done well. Supplied your blessed savages with a luscious banquet of long pig——"

The man's expression and tone were too much for Saunders. They indicated only too vividly that Venneker in health and Venneker in sickness—both of mind and body—were not entirely different beings.

"See here, Venneker! Show down! Why did you go a mucker and become a beastly cannibal?"

The question came like a snap of a whip, involuntarily, for the skipper disliked baiting a helpless man. The demand was forced from him by the attitude of Venneker. As if to punish him for his hot outburst,

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Venneker turned perfectly ghost-like in hue, his lips went purple, and his hand, a moment before holding a tumbler of brandy and egg, fell limp and lifeless at his side. Just one look he flashed upon the skipper, then his eyes closed in a deathly swoon.

Saunders bluntly ordered his men to put a shelter over the mattress, and on no account to leave the man unguarded; then he sought out old Tod Carter. Tod was not in evidence. Inquiry brought the information that the mate had gone across a piece of barren level to try to locate a ford in the river.

Following the route, picking up tracks easily in dust unmoistened for weeks, even in moonlight, the skipper soon heard sounds which convinced him that Tod had not been so interested in fords as in watching, perhaps for the first and only time in his life, a cannibal feast.

He was fascinated himself, for on creeping into range of the fires, he detected evidence that old Long had undoubtedly played fair with regard to Parchelly, and that Timorean martyr to gratitude was even then flying skyward in smoke, bearing his own black-haired head in his hand to present to whatever gods he had kow-towed to on earth.

"——! you startled me," Tod muttered, when the skipper put a hand on his shoulder and whispered his ideas about fords. "S-sh! I ain't watchin' no long-pig banquet, I ain't, skipper. Watch over the ridge yonder. See? There, right under the moon! Ain't that a white man?"

Saunders stood up, indifferent to being seen by any of Long's men. And as he rose into the light above the rocks another white man stepped down from a higher boulder and advanced to meet him.

TO BE CONTINUED

JUSTICE IN '49

by Frank H. Huston

ONE William B. (Billy) Almond was one of the first Alcaldes appointed by General Riley, the last military governor of California.

Billy, as he was commonly called in court and out, was somewhat of a character, although a man of discernment and, as far as it went, of clear judgment. He had an idea that he could see through a case at once and with a wave of his hand solve and dismiss one that would puzzle the brain of a Marshall or a Taney.

He assumed a rough, coarse manner, would sit at the fireplace in his shack, feet elevated to the rough board mantel, and thus hold court, attired in a red undershirt, spitting tobacco juice copiously and cleaning his nails in a bored and abstracted manner.

A sea captain was sued in Almond's court by a doctor for services rendered to the crew. Billy looked over the large number of witnesses, spat reflectively and said—

"Doc, you're the first witness; let's hear what you got to say."

The medico becoming a trifle prolix, Almond cut him short, saying:

"Tell it in as few words as you can and be quick about it; and as for you lawyers, I don't want you to interrupt, d'ye hear? Not a —— word out of you, one way or the other."

When the doctor had concluded, Billy looked the captain and other witnesses over reflectively and announced:

"That's all I want to hear. Judgment for the plaintiff in the sum of a hundred and fifty dollars, and I fine the captain fifty dollars for trying to make a fool out of this court."

As there was no superior body to appeal to the fine was paid.

One attorney, after having been handled and defeated in this summary manner, rose and commenced reading from an open book. Almond turned his head and remarked that the case was ended and no further remarks were needed. Then he leaned back with his thumbs through his suspenders.

"I am aware of all that, your honor," responded the attorney gravely, "but I was simply reading you a passage to show you what an old fool Blackstone was."

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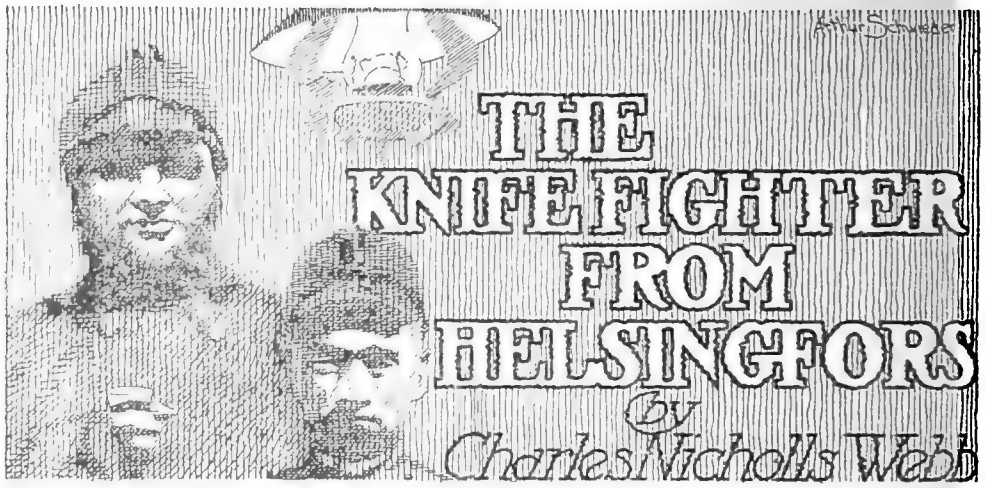

THE KNIFE FIGHTER FROM HELSINGFORS

By Charles Nicholls Webb

Author of "A Triumphant Journey"

"BES' knife-fighter ever come out o' Winland!" roared Matti Finnilla to the patrons of Kelly's dance-hall at Iron City.

Most of them laughed good-naturedly at his boast. Finnilla was a man to be handled with gloved hands. He was tall and muscular and his Mongolian features were crisscrossed with scars which heightened his resemblance to the fiend incarnate and gave some color of verisimilitude to his tales of his knife-fighting experience. Only his partner, little Waino Saari, whose exacting truthfulness often brought him trouble, denied him firmly, wearily, as always.

"No, no, Matti. Not bes'. 'Ritty good, but not bes'. Say yus' 'good,' but not 'bes' in Winland'."

In another minute the two miners were at each other's throats, or, to be more exact, Finnilla was at Saari's throat. The men in the room gathered about the two with interest, although they had no illusions as to the outcome. This periodical argument as to Finnilla's knife-fighting ability would not be appropriately settled with knives. As usual, Finnilla would manhandle his partner and in all probability would leave little Saari gasping for breath at the end.

"The big bully! It ought to be stopped," said a young mining engineer.

His companion, a shift boss at the Adelaide iron mine, placed a restraining hand on his arm.

"Let them fight it out. It's their Saturday night fun. No one interferes with them. It's like butting in on a quarrel between a man and his wife. Let 'em fight it out."

"Bully it out, you mean," said the young engineer, disgustedly. "He's nearly killing that little fellow. I suppose that's what you folks on the Mesaba Range call good sport."

"Well," mused the shift boss philosophically, as he watched the uneven battle shift from one end of the hall to the other, "it may or may not be good sport, but you can't deny that it is good training for the little fellow. Some day he's going to lick that big animal."

"They're on the same contract at the Adelaide," he explained to the younger man. "They're partners. Best contract in the whole mine. Send half again as much dirt up as the next best. Work like demons and fight every Saturday night. Only thing we fear is that Matti will kill Waino some time. If he does we'll lose 'em both, for the big Finn will die of despondency."

Waino, by this time, was exhausted and lay flat on his back on the long bench which ran the length of the hall, while his recent assailant ministered to him. Fifteen minutes later they left the dance-hall together.

"You see," explained Johnson, the shift boss, later in the evening, "that argument between Finnilla and Saari has to be handled diplomatically. Some of us have to spend a lot of time figuring 'tons per man, per day,' and we're the ones to realize what it means to lose a team like that."

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He went on to relate to the engineer how it had been through sheer diplomacy that the two men had been argued out of the idea of fighting with huge knives and cutting each other into ribbons, according to the Finn fashion which was rapidly becoming obsolete even in the old world. The mine officials had done everything to keep the men contented, for they were too big an asset to the property to lose carelessly.

The dance-hall patrons, who were now laughingly discussing the recent encounter, agreed that the two Finns were the best of friends and that in all probability they had forgotten their differences by this time. Ordinarily this would have been a fairly accurate conjecture. Tonight, however, Waino Saari had been handled a trifle more roughly than usual and did not feel as charitably disposed toward his partner as on previous occasions.

"You get a little drunk and you like to act smart before that crowd," he told Finnilla in Finnish as they descended the long hill that led from Kelly's dance-hall to the village.

"Like to act smart!" exclaimed Matti. "Why you said—you said——"

"Never mind what I said," interjected Waino. "We just finished arguing about that. Every Saturday night we make —— fools of ourselves before that crowd in there. I'm sick of it, that's all. I'm not going there with you any more."

His huge partner strode on in silence.

"Well," he said finally in a peevish tone, "I say I'm the best knife-fighter——"

"And I say you're not, but I'm not going to fight about it again tonight."

Finnilla thought this over.

"Who's you t'ink better?" he demanded in English.

"Never min'; I know better in Helsingfors, same town in Winland you come from."

"Who's?"

"Never min'. I tell you maybe some other time. Now, tonight I got enough. You see?"

"Aw-right," conceded Finnilla.

Without another word they entered their tiny tar-paper shack on the outskirts of the Black Location. In silence they prepared for bed. Both were conscious that relations between them were dangerously near the breaking point.

THEY were stolidly agreeable the next day when they sought the comforting ministrations of the Suomi bath-house, and did not once refer to the subject of knife-fighting.

Monday morning they went to work at the usual hour and in the usual way and paid slight attention to the questioning of Eric Hallstrom, the battered, one-armed caretaker at the miners' "dry" where they changed clothes before and after their day's work.

"Hal-lo, Matt an' Waino. Long time, no see. How you come, boys?"

"Aw—right," muttered Finnilla.

"Every day you see," replied Saari. "Why you say 'long time'?"

"It's yoost the way I speak," explained Hallstrom. "I hear you boys fight lak —— Saturday night."

"Uh, huh."

"Same ol' fightin' Finlanders, huh? Ain't yuh?"

"Uh, huh."

"What you fight about now?"

"Nottin'."

"Same as usual, by golly! Ain't it?"

"Uh, huh."

"Same —— thing nex' Saturday night, I 'spose."

"Uh, huh. I s'pose."

Seated on the bench, drawing on their boots, they eyed their questioner stolidly. Hallstrom abandoned the cross-examination.

At the door of the dry they met Cap'n Tom Borrow, Cornish mining captain of the Adelaide.

" 'Ullo, boys. Glad I caught you before you went hunderground. Want you to leave that place you're in for this shift. Go to Number Ten, 360-foot level, to do some cleanin' up."

Both men nodded without change of expression and awaited further instructions.

"Want to get that place cleaned up. Looks like a snake room in distress. —— me, if it doesn't! Great hoogly beast of a rock 'angin' over'ead right as you go in. Get un out o' there first thing or some one'll be crooshed."

Finnilla and Saari nodded again in acquiescence.

"Want to get that oore in there now. Need it bad, but she's got to be cleaned up first. Air's gettin' bad over in west forty. Comin' in from they abandoned drifts, I guess. That's all, boys. Give 'er ——!"

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They nodded and entered the cage which carried them underground daily. On the 360-foot level they went, without a word and with confident knowledge of the workings of the property, to the drift of which Cap'n Tom had spoken.

It was outlined a trifle more irregularly than the others and Matti sniffed contemptuously at the careless mining which had left it in this shape. They found the overhanging rock which the captain had mentioned and holding their carbide lamps so that the meager rays would light a considerable area, tapped it tentatively with their picks.

"Solid," pronounced Finnilla.

"Maybe," was Saari's more conservative judgment.

To a layman the rock would seem to be perilously hung above the entrance to a dark, cube-shaped opening. Apparently it was ready to precipitate itself on the heads of any one working beneath. Directly under it and in front of the small opening was a large heap of iron ore or sand which the men, for some reason, had neglected to remove.

"Let us clean it up back here first," suggested Waino in Finnish.

They worked in silence for several minutes. Then Matti said, apropos of nothing:

"What knife-fighter did you mean?"

"Better than you?" queried his partner.

"Yes—in Helsingfors."

Saari plied his shovel assiduously for several minutes. Then he straightened himself and sniffed the air suspiciously.

"Who did you mean?" persisted Finnilla.

"Oh—Sula Jacobson," replied Saari, impatient at the questioning and at the same time wondering why his partner renewed the argument during working-hours.

"You think so—do you?"

Finnilla had stopped shoveling and glared viciously at Saari.

"Yes," said Waino quietly. "He would cut you into little strips—like bacon. You would be helpless."

"That's what you think, is it?"

Matti's shovel swung in a semicircle before his smaller partner could realize that the man was beside himself with rage. The implement struck Waino squarely on the side of the head and felled him. He slowly picked himself up, his head aching dully and his jaw strangely numb. His feelings had suffered the greatest injury, however, and at Matti's gesticulated invitation to "Come on!" he shook his head.

"That's the first time you have ever tried that in working-hours," he replied, as usual in their native language, "and it's the last time."

Both men resumed work. Finnilla, ashamed at his outburst of temper, retired to the rear of the overhanging rock.

"I will quit Matti tonight," reflected Waino. "He will have to get some other little man to pound and choke."

Glancing to one side he could see the dim light of Finnilla's carbide lamp moving about in the dark recess back of the rock. He was seized by a sudden idea of revenge and acted upon it almost without giving it a second thought.

He stepped to the end of the drift and examined the huge boulder carefully. His partner, busy inside, paid no attention to him. His back was turned. Waino picked at the loose fragments which held the rock in place and with a quick jerk dislodged the portion which acted as a keystone for the mass.

Down it crashed, bringing with it timbers, iron ore and the surrounding rock. Waino jumped back nimbly. A moment later he examined his work. The opening was effectually closed. Finnilla was imprisoned inside.

Again acting upon an unaccountable impulse he hurriedly left the drift and made his way to the shaft. The air had become heavy with a pungent smell which did not seem to be one of the usual odors of the mine and which seemed to emanate from the west portion of the workings. Waino's head seemed weak and ached dully, which he attributed entirely to Finnilla's blow.

A group of excited men appeared ahead of him at the entrance to the man cage. They were supporting one of their number and Waino, at first, thought that this miner had met with an accident. It was not until that they were nearly hoisted to the surface that they excitedly made him understand the reason for their flight from the 360-foot level.

"Rotten air!" said an Italian. "Dominick Forti, he droppa down. He no can breathe. Our lamps go out. No can burn. She come-a een from the close' drifts."

Cap'n Tom and Johnson, the shift boss, met them at the surface with anxious faces.

"Where's that big pardner of yours,

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Waino?" he roared, as they left the cage. "Didn' 'e come up? Wot in —— did you do? Leave 'im to die in that rotten air?"

And to Saari came the swift realization that he had left Finnilla imprisoned in the gas-laden atmosphere of the 360-foot level. Perhaps he had already been overcome by the noxious damp. He glanced at the cage. It had started on its return trip underground. In two steps Waino had reached the head of the ladderway and before any one could stop him he was again making his way into the mine.

His descent of the long series of ladders leading to the 360-foot level seemed interminable. His headache was increasingly severe and as he arrived at the bottom his knees wabbled strangely.

The cage had already left the level on its last trip to the surface. Waino staggered along the drift leading to Number Ten. He found it difficult, almost impossible, to breathe. His temples were throbbing and he began to think he was losing the power of conscious thought. Still he fought on, almost within reaching distance, stoically determined to rescue his imprisoned partner.

"Matti!"

He tried to shout but only gasped impotently. Then he collapsed on the floor of the drift.

A MINUTE or two after Waino had started underground, Cap'n Tom Borrow turned with an exclamation to greet Matti Finnilla, who stood silently at his side.

"My ——! W'ere did you come from?"

"Timber shaf'," said Finnilla briefly.

" 'Ow in ——! W'y, 'e's gone after you. —— me! Your pardner Waino's down there without 'elmet or nothin'. Lookin' for you! Couldn't stop the little beggar. Down the bloody ladder 'e went like a shot!"

And like a shot Finnilla went down the same ladder. Johnson, the shift boss, caught at him as his head and shoulders were disappearing below the surface, but the athletic Finn eluded his grasp.

"Now we got two down there to be rescued," wailed Cap'n Borrow. "Don't waste any more time, men. Let's get after 'em."

When the rescue team reached them in an incredibly short time, the two Finns were lying unconscious within a rod of each other.

"BEFORE the big rock fall," explained Finnilla at the hospital hours later, "I 'mell the bad air. Right away I hear Waino run to get out of way."

Waino, lying on an adjacent cot, glanced incredulously at his partner. Was it possible that Matti did not know he had deliberately imprisoned him?

"I break out easy and I know shorter way from that place to timber shaf'," continued Finnilla. "I know bad air, Waino. I work in bad air before."

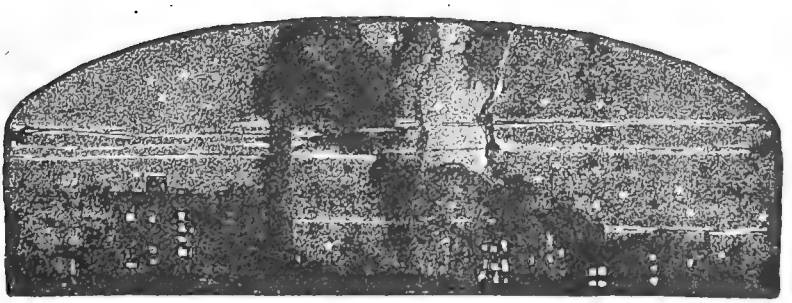
"You're good miner, Matti," murmured Waino through half-closed lips.

"Good knife-fighter, too, Waino? Bes' knife-fighter ever come from Helsingfors?"

His partner considered this for a moment, looking silently at the whitewashed ceiling. An inspiration came to him.

"Yes," he decided. "You're bes' knife-fighter ever come from—Winland, Matti."

For the champion, one Sula Jacobson, he recalled suddenly, had never left Helsingfors.



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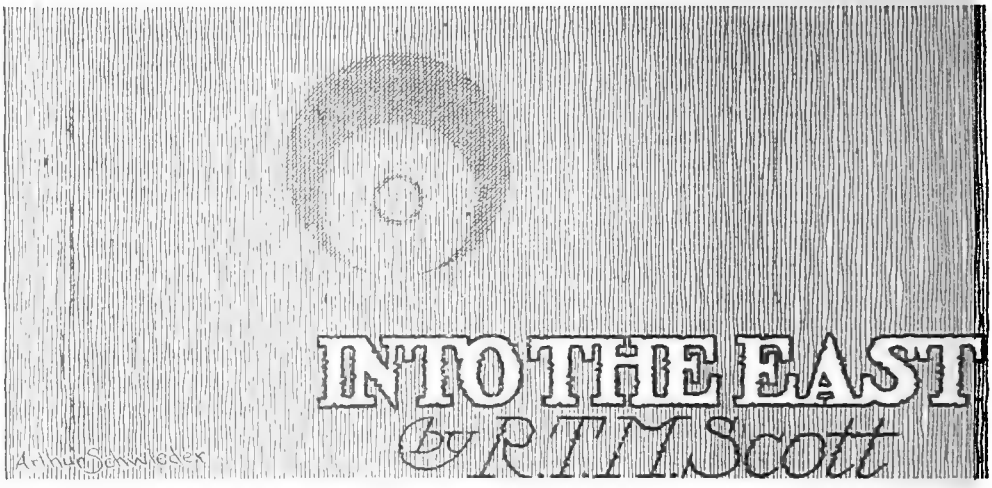

Author of "Magic," "Find the Man," etc.

SIR OLIVER HAULTAIN, head of the Criminal Intelligence Department of India, sat before his great desk in his Calcutta office and ran his searching gray eyes over some notes which had just been handed to him by a native clerk. A sultry sun held the city in its grasp, and a warm current of air, aided by whirring electric fans, drifted through some open windows. Suddenly a Maltese kitten leaped upon the desk and dabbed playfully with a paw at the paper held in the old official's hand. As if aroused by the disturbance, Sir Oliver spoke to the waiting clerk.

"Admit the American, *sahib*."

The kitten was still playing with the paper when the visitor entered. He was not the type of American that is often portrayed upon the English stage any more than Sir Oliver was the type of Englishman that is sometimes seen upon the American stage. The American, tall and indolently loose-limbed in movement, glanced once around the room and dropped his eyes to a waste-basket near his feet before the desk. The Englishman regarded his visitor quietly and continued to play with the kitten, waiting to be addressed. Since his visitor remained silent, the Englishman was the first to speak. "Mr. Smith," he asked, "why did you come to India?"

"I am searching for a man who went under the name of Cadz in America."

"What is your profession?"

"Detective."

"What did Cadz do?"

"Plotted to destroy the government of the United States—to smash the country."

"How?"

"Wholesale murder of some kind. I do not know exactly. That is why I am after him."

"A difficult task," commented Sir Oliver, "and a dangerous one—if what you say is true. We have many dangerous characters in India. Do you come officially?"

"No," replied Smith. "The man gave me the slip in America, but I intercepted a code cablegram stating that the plot was called off temporarily and directing Cadz to proceed to India. I could get no authority from Washington to follow."

Smith mopped his forehead with a handkerchief which he dropped to the desk where the kitten came over to play with it. Continuing—

"I drew out my bank balance and followed."

"Did you follow because the man had threatened the United States or because he had given you the slip?"

"Both," was the laconic reply.

The old eyes scrutinized the tall American and something of admiration was in their depths. They roved meditatively over the lanky frame.

"Cadz is a dangerous man," spoke Sir Oliver after a silence, "as dangerous as any tool employed by certain diseased intellects who hoped to upset the world—about 1914. I know him and I want him. He is in

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India, although I do not know where. Those who employ him—and they have unlimited money—decided that it was premature to attack America. Consequently he was recalled at the last moment for work in Asia. He is exceedingly clever and very dangerous. You do not know this country and, even if you did, frankly I do not think you are a remorseless enough instrument to strike down Cadz."

"Then I must depend upon my own resources—as long as my money lasts?"

"Please do not be offended," went on Sir Oliver, "but I would not assist you to capture Cadz any more than I would assist this playful kitten to attack a tiger."

Smith carelessly drew his handkerchief away from the kitten. It slipped from his fingers and fell into the waste-basket. Bending lazily, he picked it out in the shape of a crumpled ball and presented it once more to the kitten.

"I may be more dangerous than I look," he replied very quietly. "Things are not always what they seem."

The little bundle of Maltese fur advanced toward the crumpled handkerchief, one paw lifted in a playful manner. Suddenly the animal crouched while the hair of its tail stood out to a ridiculous size. It bared its teeth and glanced furtively from side to side, spitting viciously with its nose against the handkerchief.

Sir Oliver Haultain leaned forward in a puzzled, interested manner while Smith, chuckling softly, swept the handkerchief over the waste-basket before returning it to his pocket.

After a moment of silence Sir Oliver motioned to a chair beside him.

"Sit down," he said. "I can use you—perhaps help you. I have your record since reaching India and I believe that I can place a certain amount of confidence in you. Are you willing to face a good chance of being killed?"

"Uh-huh," replied Smith, "if necessary."

"Then return to your hotel and live like any tourist, but be prepared at all times for anything that may occur."

"Those are all of your instructions?"

"All—at present."

"You do not appear to be placing much confidence in me at present," commented Smith.

"You have my only terms," returned Sir Oliver whose eyes had grown a little hard. "Remember that I will use you. Do you accept?"

"Uh-huh," said Smith and walked from the office in quite as lazy a manner as he had come in.

Alone, Sir Oliver sat for a moment with bowed head, thinking. Then, with a riding-crop, he reached for the waste-basket and dragged it to him. Running his hand among the loose papers in the basket, he picked out—a dead sparrow. He smiled as he thought of the quickness of wit and the sleight of hand which had permitted his visitor to prove that things were not always what they seemed. The smell of the dead bird had worked the miracle in the kitten. To a servant he held up the bird.

"*Sahib*," explained the boy, "bird come in window and fly into punkah.* Boy put in basket."

"Ask Jackson *sahib* to come," directed Sir Oliver, tossing the sparrow back into the basket.

The servant had scarcely left the room before a white man entered and halted with almost military precision before the desk of his chief.

"You sent for me, sir?"

"Jackson, you remember that agent from Moscow—sometimes known as Cadz?"

"Yes, sir. Reported to be back from America about a month ago."

"I think we will go after him."

"Right, sir. Know his whereabouts?"

"No, but there is an American—a very clever chap—after him. This American came over on his own account, partly patriotism and partly—if I read him right—because he is the kind who never acknowledges defeat. I propose to use this man—Smith by name—as bait. Let Cadz strike Smith while we strike Cadz."

"But how, sir?"

"We know," continued Sir Oliver, "that Cadz has a peculiar tattoo mark on the inside of his left arm. He does not know that we are aware of this mark. We have never given it out. Let it be known in bazaar circles that an eccentric American is searching for a man named Cadz who recently visited the United States. Give it out that this American will identify his man by means of a certain tattoo mark which he

*Punkah is the Indian name for a large fan suspended from the ceiling and pulled backward and forward by means of a rope. It is still used to a great extent in India, but is being superseded by the electric fan to which the native continues to give the name of punkah.

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refuses to describe to the authorities until he, himself, has failed."

"Easily done, sir. You think that Cadz will make an attempt to shut the mouth of this man Smith?"

"A tattooed criminal is a marked man. Cadz will try to kill Smith. We must be on hand to capture him before he strikes—or immediately afterward."

"Right, sir, but it's rather rough on Smith unless he is a very good man and you have warned him."

"I have warned him that he may expect to be killed," replied Sir Oliver, bending down to brush the kitten from the waste-basket where it was trying to get at the bird, "and his brain has wings."

Several days later Smith sat in his hotel room with a frown upon his usually unmoved countenance. He was not worrying about the man he was chasing. So far as that was concerned he was more than satisfied. If Sir Oliver Haultain had sized up his American visitor at all correctly, Smith had more than returned the compliment. He was certain that the old official lived up to what little he said. He felt sure that something would happen but, in the meantime, his money was running out.

As a matter of economy Smith had already dismissed his boy, and a white man, in India without a servant, is most uncomfortable to say the least. A white man with no money is desperately situated. He can not pick up an odd job as he might in western countries. All manual labor is native labor and a white man can not—would not be permitted to—accept such employment. Smith had been in India for a month, traveling from Bombay to Karachi and from Karachi to Calcutta. His money was getting very low and he had good reason to frown.

There came a knock at the door. Like a flying shadow the frown vanished from Smith's face. Good naturedly and slowly he turned toward the door before drawling—

"Come in."

The door opened and a native servant entered and salaamed.

"*Sahib* want boy? Me, very good boy! Know all hotels. Know Agra, Delhi, all India! Agra, Delhi, good water—no cholera. *Sahib* want boy?"

"No," said Smith, "not today."

"*Sahib*, me clean boots very quick," persisted the boy. "Will show how quick."

Darting across the room, the native picked up a pair of boots and carried them hastily into the bathroom the door of which he closed as he entered.

Smith sat quietly waiting. He was in a strange land and among strange people. Yet human nature is common to all peoples and it was Smith's profession to understand human nature and to read much character and motive at sight. He had leaped inwardly alert the moment he had looked into the native's eyes. The next instant he had noticed the peculiar caste mark* painted upon the dark forehead and his memory carried him back to one fearful moment in America when that same design, tattooed upon an uplifted arm, had caught his gaze before the knife descended and missed his throat by the fraction of an inch. It was a simple design—merely a crescent almost surrounding a tiny circle. Smith sat quietly waiting.

"*Sahib*, no find brush. Come back tomorrow. Salaam, *sahib*."

The servant, who had almost immediately returned from the bathroom, dropped the uncleaned boots upon the floor and made a hasty exit, throwing one rather furtive glance at the silent figure sprawling upon the chair.

At the closing of the door Smith came to life as if he had been an unleashed bloodhound. Upon his hands and knees he followed the course that the native had taken, examining every inch of the floor. Arrived at the boots he sat for fifteen minutes and studied them with minute attention as if they had been some precious manuscript the deciphering of which might divulge secrets of the highest importance.

This was the way Smith worked when alone and not pressed for time. Before an audience, and always when speed was necessary, he assumed a lazy nonchalance which was most deceiving to the beholder. To the on-looker he appeared to leap to conclusions and to note vital details with an accuracy which almost appeared to come from a sixth sense.

From the boots Smith crawled to the bathroom door, stood erect, and entered. Here the native had spent two or three minutes beyond observation. What had

*A caste mark indicates whether a native is a follower of Vishnu or Siva—two Persons of the Hindu Trinity. There are several designs for each group. These various designs, painted upon the forehead, are in very common use and attract little or no attention unless personal enmity or religious strife comes to the front.

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he done? Smith did not know and he swept the floor, walls and ceiling with scrutinizing care. He walked to the usual furnishings of the room and examined each in turn.

Nothing seemed to be disturbed until he bent over the wash-stand and gently touched the bristles of his toothbrush with delicate finger-tips. The brush was slightly damp and, at that time in the afternoon, it should have been dry. He raised it to his nose and sniffed. There was a faint odor of something—something that held a fleeting trace of crushed almonds. It might be poison—perhaps prussic acid, one touch of which to the tongue would be death.

Smith reentered his bedroom with a satisfied stride. It was as he thought. Cadz was, in some way, being made to attack him so that the famous Criminal Intelligence Department of India might have a chance to strike. In short, Smith was the bait for a trap. If the C. I. D. failed to strike in time he must be prepared to guard his own life. Smith smiled.

The arrangement suited him. Perhaps he might even do a little more than guard himself. There was always the unexpected to consider and the motive for human action was the same the world over. In a strange country the job was harder, but that only made it the more interesting to Smith.

Once more a knock came at the door and Smith, dropping into a chair, lazily called his permission to enter.

The door opened and a tall, handsome native, in snowy servant's costume, stepped inside. A red sash girdled his waist and a towering turban of purest white surmounted his well-formed features from which black eyes gleamed down at the man in the chair. Upon his forehead, in red paint, were two pairs of vertical, parallel lines with a tiny spot midway between.

So still the boy stood for an instant that the rapidity of his first movement was most unexpected—yet Smith did not stir nor do more than follow the flying figure with his eyes. As if propelled by some powerful emotion the boy literally hurled himself across the room into a prostrate position at Smith's feet. With his forehead resting upon the floor he broke into a torrent of Hindustani which was utterly unintelligible to Smith who remained a silent and impassive spectator. At last the boy seemed to realize that he was not understood and changed to faulty English.

"*Sahib*," he said, while his voice trembled, "Langa Doonh come home!"

"Oh!" returned Smith. "You are the boy I had in Karachi for a few days before you—ah—got hurt while I was duck shooting."

"*Sahib*, I Langa Doonh, boy *sahib* save from mugger in Hub River."

As he spoke the boy pulled up a loose trouser leg and showed ugly gashes upon his calf which were only just healed.

"It was nothing," said Smith, deprecatingly. "The crocodile was too busy with you to pay attention to me. I only had to put the gun against his head and fire."

"*Sahib*, there were more muggers. *Sahib* offer life for boy. Langa Doonh now all time *sahib's* boy. *Sahib* Langa Doonh's mother and father. Boy make clean boots. *Sahib* want tea?"

As the boy rose to his feet a sudden interest came into Smith's eyes.

"How did you find me?" he asked. "I left you in Karachi and that is more than a thousand miles away."

"*Sahib* not know India," the boy exclaimed. "Langa Doonh find any white man in India very quick."

For a moment Smith was silent and then pointed to the red caste mark upon the boy's forehead.

"What do those marks mean?" he asked.

If there was any hesitation in the reply it was very fleeting. Gravely the boy spoke.

"Langa Doonh follower of Vishnu."

Upon a slip of paper Smith drew a crescent containing a tiny circle.

"And this?" he asked, holding it up.

The dark eyes of the servant looked contemptuously at the design.

"Mark of bad man," he replied disdainfully. "Mark of follower of Siva. Him steal. Him kill. Not good. Vishnu boy no like Siva boy."

"And I 'no like' Siva white man," commented Smith.

"*Sahib*, only Hindu can be follower Vishnu or Siva. White man Christian."

"I want to find a white man," went on Smith, "with Siva mark like this—" holding up the paper—"tattooed on the left arm."

"Must be very bad white man," said the boy with a puzzled expression. "What his name? Langa Doohn find him for *Sahib*."

"In my country he called himself Cadz," said Smith. "He is very bad man and uses many names."

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"Name not matter, *sahib*. Langa Doonh find him."

"How?"

"*Sahib*, same way find master all way from Karachi. Boy listen and ask questions in servants' quarters. Servants know everything about white masters. All time traveling and all time talking about masters. Just need listen servants' talk and ask few questions. Soon find out everything. *Sahib* not know India. Soon know. Langa Doonh teach."

Again there was a knock at the door and a hotel servant entered with a card on a tray. Upon the card was the name of Sir Oliver Haultain and in pencil was written—

Urgent.

Smith looked into the eyes of Langa Doonh. There could be no mistaking their expression of devotion. Silently he tossed his keys upon the bed, knowing full well that his baggage would be opened and his wardrobe attended to in the skilful manner of the experienced Indian servant.

In the rotunda of the hotel Smith found Sir Oliver at the cigar stand.

"Things are going badly," said Sir Oliver, "I consider your life to be in such danger that I came myself to get you. Cadz is probably in this hotel—may be looking at us now. Would you recognize him if disguised? Look around."

"I have already looked," was the quiet answer. "He is not here or he is too well disguised to be picked out on sight."

"Then come with me where we can talk more freely."

They stepped out upon the street and entered a government car, the native chauffeur of which drove off through the famous Maidan of Calcutta. As soon as they entered upon the beautiful, winding roads the gray-haired official turned to his companion with a worried expression which he had not permitted when under the eyes of the loungers in the hotel rotunda.

"I sent a man to guard you," he said. "At first I told him to capture Cadz and to protect you as a secondary consideration but, after reflecting upon your lack of experience in India, I changed my orders and directed that your safety was to be the first consideration. You were placed at too great a disadvantage."

"How did you induce Cadz to attack me?" asked Smith.

"You guessed that?" exclaimed Sir Oliver in surprize. "I might as well have told you everything. I sent out a report, intended to reach Cadz, to the effect that you were about to give information to the police regarding a certain tattoo mark upon Cadz's arm."

"Crescent and circle?" queried Smith. "Siva caste mark?"

"Good heavens, man!" ejaculated the old official. "How did you know Cadz bore that mark? Is there anything you don't know? I made a mistake when I did not give you my full confidence. Ask what you like and I will answer."

"What has your man done on the case?" Smith inquired.

"He sent me a few scribbled words this morning stating that Cadz was at your hotel and that he was about to place him under arrest upon the charge of sedition."

Sir Oliver gazed gloomily at the setting sun before continuing.

"That was early this morning and I have heard nothing more. I am afraid that Jackson is dead. He was my cleverest man—and his wife and baby are arriving on the next mail-boat."

Smith straightened from his lounging attitude with a jerk.

"Jackson dead and his wife and kid coming out?" he barked. "How do you know he's dead?"

"Men like Jackson are seldom silenced except by death," was the quiet answer.

"Then I'll make sure of it before his wife and kid arrive," continued Smith. "Get me back to the hotel. It's time I stepped on the gas."

"Stepped on the gas?" queried Sir Oliver with a puzzled look. "Ah, I understand. You mean that it is time that you put on speed. Unfortunately, India does not understand speed."

"All the worse for India," went on Smith, showing a most unusual animation. "When the happiness of a wife and kid are at stake I don't give a —— for all the traditions of Asia. Are you going to take me back or must I jump out and leg it?"

For a moment Sir Oliver Haultain turned and looked full into the face of his companion.

"Very well—America," he said in low, emphatic tones before jerking out a few words in native dialect to the chauffeur.

The brakes screeched and the huge car

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slowed and turned right in the face of a gharri the trotting horse of which jammed the shafts into the side of the car before the cursing *gharri-wallah* pulled his steed back upon its haunches. A native traffic officer galloped up upon seeing the flagrant breach of traffic regulations, but Sir Oliver leaned forward and the officer's hand flew up in salute as the car sped away.

In the fading light it seemed to Smith that the officer proceeded to abuse the innocent *gharri-wallah*. Sir Oliver, however, did not look back but sat hunched and silent in his seat while the car threaded its way at amazing speed among *gharries* and rickshaws. Several times he raised a hand to traffic officers in that indifferent acknowledgment of salute so characteristic of the high English official.

Not a word was spoken on that furious drive. Sir Oliver had evidently demanded the utmost speed from the chauffeur. It may have been reaction from Smith's words and it may have been a cunning, phychological attempt to lend further impetus to the brain of the young American.

Street lights were burning and a few great stars had appeared in the deep blue of the Indian sky as the brakes gave a final screech and the car stopped before the hotel.

"Like to go in alone?" asked Sir Oliver.

"Uh-huh," said Smith. "Give me two yards start."

If Smith had shown excitement in the car he had no trace of it left as he sauntered into the hotel and stopped for a cigar at the news-stand. Half way across the rotunda he had no definite plan of action. Before he reached the desk he saw his first move. If Cadz was in the hotel for the purpose of attacking him he was probably located close to his own room. Smith turned to the desk clerk.

"My name is Smith. I don't like my room. Could I change it for the one on the right or left?"

It was a long distance shot and Smith lighted his cigar while the clerk referred to the room plan. Not once had he appeared to pay the slightest attention to any one in the rotunda. To all appearances he was a tired traveler in a hot and dusty country with his interest at the lowest ebb.

"Sorry sir," said the clerk, "but both rooms are taken."

"Put me down for the first room vacated," returned Smith.

"The one on the right is a permanent guest," replied the clerk. "The other man came in yesterday and may leave soon. I'll put you down for his room when he leaves."

"Tall Englishman with long mustache?" asked Smith turning away.

"I think you are mistaken, sir," said the clerk. "He is short and foreign in appearance."

But Smith did not appear to hear as he moved off toward the grand stairway. His room was two flights up and, on the first landing, he stopped to relight his cigar. Down the long corridor native servants squatted outside their masters' doors or hurried in and out on errands connected with dressing for dinner.

Smith saw everything and found nothing that he wanted. He ascended one more flight of stairs and found himself upon his own corridor. Here was much the same scene as below, but there was a difference. The hall light near Smith's room was not burning, nor was there any light in the room itself. The room on the right showed a light through the transom, but the one on the left was in darkness.

Little as Smith knew India, he knew that a good servant should be squatting outside his master's door before dinner and the room should be lighted and ready for dressing. All white people of any importance dress for dinner in India. Yet there was no Langa Doonh outside the door and the room was in darkness.

Smith dropped his cigar upon the tile floor as if in disgust at its drawing quality. A burning cigar may be a disadvantage in the dark. Leisurely he strolled forward and knocked upon his own door. If any person waited for him within, that person would not expect the owner of the room to knock before entering. There might be some advantage in entering unknown, and Smith was accustomed to gaining advantage by doing the most unexpected things—both big and little.

There was no answer to the knock and the waiting man turned sidewise so that his ear came very close to the panel of the door. Not a sound was to be heard.

Once more Smith knocked and, dropping a hand into a side pocket, walked boldly in. The shutters had been closed and the blinds drawn so that the room was very dark. Swiftly closing the door behind him Smith

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advanced to the center of the room and felt for the electric light, a hanging two-bulb fixture. The closing of the door had left the room in intense darkness so that absolutely nothing could be seen. A thick carpet rendered footsteps practically inaudible.

As Smith's groping hand touched an electric bulb he noted with interest that it was warm. In the dark he deftly unscrewed the bulb and gave the useless switch a loud click before feeling for and finding the one remaining lamp. It was taking a risk, but he had been taking a risk, he believed, ever since he had entered the room and, for the matter of that, he had been taking risks all his life.

For a full minute Smith stood perfectly still in the silence and then hurled the unscrewed lamp into a corner of the room. Half a second after the fragile, glass-inclosed vacuum burst with a loud pop, Smith turned on the remaining light and his free hand shot out with a blue-black automatic.

A man, sitting quietly in a chair with a peculiar looking gun in his hand, had twisted his head in the direction of the bursting lamp. He looked back quickly enough but he did not attempt to raise his gun. It was too late. He was covered.

"Game is up, Cadz," announced Smith in a rather bored manner.

The man smiled and spoke, but he did not speak English and he spoke a little louder than was necessary.

"Speak English," cut in Smith, "or I'll put a bullet through your pistol arm to teach you a lesson."

"Very good!" was the cool reply. "Anything else you would like?"

"Drop the gun!"

"It's such a useful toy," returned Cadz, his dark features breaking into a grin. "See the muffler? It hardly makes any noise at all. What if I refuse?"

The man's audacity was astounding. He actually tilted the muzzle upward and a little in Smith's direction.

Smith advanced with a couple of strides.

"Drop that gun, Cadz, or I'll pot you through the head without another warning."

Cadz tilted the gun still more but not toward Smith.

"You would kill an innocent man?" he asked.

"Not by killing you," drawled Smith. "You're going, Cadz—into another world—in one more second."

Even as Cadz spoke his gun tilted a trifle more.

"I do not refer—ah—to myself," he returned in a fair imitation of Smith's drawl. "I understand that Jackson's wife and child are coming out on the next boat."

The pressure of Smith's finger lessened on the trigger.

"Speak!" he said. "Get it off your chest."

"Thought I could make you see reason," chuckled Cadz. "I'll make it short. Jackson is bound and gagged in my room. My servant is sitting on your bathroom window and can slide down a drain-pipe to the ground. You will remember that I first spoke the native tongue which you do not understand. I ordered my boy, upon hearing a shot, to go to my room and cut Jackson's throat. It's your move."

"Pretty little fairy story," replied Smith with a grin; but he placed no pressure upon his trigger.

Cadz stretched out a foot and pulled open the bathroom door. From where he stood Smith glimpsed the head and shoulders of a native as he leaned in the window. It was the same boy who had applied for a job that afternoon.

"It's your move," repeated Cadz as he kicked the door shut. "Don't think that the boy won't do it. Hinduism has a trinity which, if properly understood, corresponds with the Trinity of Christianity. Brahma is the Creator, Vishnu is the Preserver and Siva is the Destroyer. Fortunately Hinduism has degenerated and is no longer understood by the masses. Siva, the Destroyer, no longer represents natural change in evolution. It is easy to convince the Siva boy that death and destruction are good. My boy will use his knife and the poor wife and child—but it's your move."

"Good!" retorted Smith quite cheerfully. "I know where your room is and I can beat your boy to it after shooting you if you don't drop that gun. It is now *your* move."

"Very well," sneered Cadz. "I'll try a new kind of move."

There came a muffled cough from the uptilted pistol and the one light in the room gave its vacuum pop, leaving utter darkness once more. It was a marvelous shot and Smith admired the man's extraordinary ability even as he threw himself flat upon the floor at the very feet of his opponent.

Even as Smith touched the floor two more vicious coughs sounded just above his head

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and he heard the plaster fall from the opposite wall as the bullets struck. With one long arm he swept the darkness above him with all his strength. Half-way in the sweep, his forearm struck an outstretched wrist and something hard thumped upon the carpet. The next instant Smith, like an angry wild-cat, leaped upon his man.

It was all over in a few seconds. A furious blow to the solar plexus ended it and Smith proceeded to drag the limp form to the door and light.

Half-way across the room Smith saw the door open. Somebody had relighted the hall lamp and light streamed into the room. Standing in the door-way was a disheveled and tottering white man.

"I'm Jackson of the C. I. D.," he gasped. "Your boy just found me tied up in the next room. I sent him to get help, but I heard the fighting and came in. Thought you might need——"

Before he could finish, the tottering man dropped in a faint upon the floor. The next instant two English police sergeants raced down the corridor and, striding behind them came Sir Oliver Haultain. Last of all came Langa Doonh, an expression of great joy breaking over his face upon beholding his master alive and whole.

Smith pitched his insensible captive at the first sergeant to arrive who staggered at the impact but snapped on a pair of handcuffs without bothering to ascertain whether the man were dead or alive.

Sir Oliver knelt at once over the prostrate form of Jackson.

"Just a faint," he muttered and looked up with a queer expression at Smith.

For a moment the group was motionless and Sir Oliver coughed in an embarrassed way.

"Going back to America?" he inquired gruffly, still looking at Smith.

"Not just now," said Smith.

"What are you going to do?"

"Don't know. I'm broke."

"Broke nothing!" roared the old man. "There is a reward of five thousand rupees for the man you have just captured, and the C. I. D. has a job for you as long as you will stay."

"Are there more men like Cadz in India?" asked Smith.

"Cadz is a child compared to some men that Asia holds," returned Sir Oliver very gravely. "Will you stay for awhile and—ah—step on the gas now and then?"

"Uh-huh," said Smith, "if you like."

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Author of "The Wind," "The Drought," etc.

THE man, ragged and tattered and gaunt with hunger, came from out of nowhere along the sandy river bank and turned off through the willows toward the mud town of Mariposa.

As he wound his weary way along a path a pliable willow withe that had been caught forward under a twig by some former passer slipped loose and switched him smartly across the face.

"You oughtn't to a done that," he said, in that monotone a man often uses when talking to inanimate things.

He seized the stem, ran his great hand down it almost to the butt, paused thoughtfully, then slid his hold up to about his waist, testingly, then up to his shoulders, and snapped it off. He threw the top aside.

"Reckon that will about even up with that," he observed aloud and went on.

Despite his weariness he was alert. He kept out a wary eye. This caused him to be startled more than if he had been dull when a burro suddenly stepped into the trail ahead of him, so close he could have touched its gray hips. He jerked back a step with a grunt.

A Mexican youth beside the burro grinned with a kind of tiny triumph. It was evident he had pushed the animal out suddenly to be startling.

The young fellow mounted and jogged on, beating the burro on the ribs with a stout green willow. The big man kept on behind, but presently the rider and his mount were out of sight.

"I'll have to even up for that," he thought.

In a few minutes he came to a new adobe house at the edge of a sandy field where a man was at work. The youth was jangling buckles and chains and harnessing the burro. He did not hear the traveler's approach. The big man got up behind the Mexican and yelped sharply. The burro jumped aside and the one of the erstwhile triumphant grin shrank, and sprang around, and sat down in the sand.

The American grinned.

"That's about right for you I reckon," he allowed and went on toward Mariposa.

Through the scattered adobe houses he went, past the three or four stores, noted the American immigration station, and headed on for the American cavalry garrison beyond. This was marked by a Stars and Stripes blowing out languidly on a high, white flagpole. Near this pole, when he arrived, he met a sentry on post.

"I want to enlist," he said. "Where's the guy with the meal tickets?"

The sentry directed him to headquarters.

"Don't tell 'em there, 'Where's the meal ticket!' " he advised. "Tell 'em you want to serve your country and your flag. And histe your shoulders, you gargoyle, or they'll send you to the artillery."

The big fellow shook himself out. Somehow he looked like a gorilla—not tall but widespread and thick of limbs. He was

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a little bowed of legs, and the backs of his hands were hairy, and his little black eyes burned with a low, fierce fire.

"Uh-humh," Captain Matthew observed a minute later. "What do you want to enlist for? A pension?"

"To serve my country and my flag," parroted the applicant.

The officer's eyes twinkled.

"Fine. What else?"

"Uhh—I gotta eat."

"What else?"

The smoldering eyes swept moodily out over the mud houses of Mariposa, across the dun sand and runty mesquite to the Rio Grande, and off into the vast and hazy reaches of Mexico.

"I've got to even up," he muttered.

But Matthew did not pursue this. He needed men. Besides this fellow looked desperately hungry, and Captain Matt was a kindly man.

"What can you do?" he asked.

"Blacksmith," came the quick answer.

"And your name?"

"Doggetty."

"All right, Doggetty, you're on. Go over there to the kitchen and tell the cook to give you a feed. Then come to headquarters and we'll see if you measure up."

The order to the cook gained all for Doggetty that he could have wished. He liked the looks of things—the big stove with boilers of food aboard, the loaves of bread, and soldiers in undershirts more or less loafing around. He strolled out back, when he had eaten till he hurt.

There was a trough and three or four soldiers washing their hands and faces. One was drying his hands. From him Doggetty borrowed the makings, and when he had twisted up a cigaret he raked his pockets for a match. In the process he jerked an American nickel out and it fell to the ground. As he stooped for it the soldier with the towel set a foot down on it.

Doggetty jerked back up. From low-burning eyes he regarded the smart Alec.

The smart Alec was Flake. He was a born jokester and rawhider. He perpetrated his depredations automatically. Nobody with reason would have set his foot down on Doggetty's coin, and Doggetty a stranger and as much of an unknown quantity as *x*.

Doggetty's glance roved. It picked out Flake's bright metal soap box on the edge of the trough. In it reposed about the half of a ten cent cake of soap. Doggetty took the soap and flung it off into the runty mesquite nearby.

"Five cents," he observed with a voice that had the timber of anger in it. "Five cents' worth of soap. Even up."

"What the ——, Bill!" exclaimed the astonished Flake.

Doggetty hitched up his pants and screwed up his face that had no beauty in it.

"You fellers," said he. "Don't monkey with me. I even up, little or big, eye for eye, skin for skin."

Doggetty stalked off to headquarters.

As soon as he got his arms and legs into a uniform, and was made a property holder by all the issuances of the Q. M., and was assigned to a barrack, bunk and locker, Doggetty hit off straight for the immigration office he had seen down in the adobe town. He seated himself on a corner of its porch, in the shade. In a moment a great fat man appeared in the doorway. They looked at each other, in such a manner, too, that a trio of soldiers passing paused to see the show.

"Name's Doggetty," said one of the principals. "Just held up my hand over there—swearin' me into the outfit."

"I'm the inspector," said the other. "I thought you was new, Mr. Er—Big Dog. I could smell moth balls on your clothes."

"Haw-haw-haw!" roared the three soldiers.

Doggetty sniffed at himself.

"I do notice some kind of medicine," he said.

He regarded the guffawing soldiers with a bitter eye. Then he pointed his wide nose at the inspector.

"Huh, Fat, I smell sweat on you. Now you soldiers, —— you, laugh!"

The soldiers did, while the inspector stood there with his lips round like an o.

"Reckon that's even up," Doggetty told the world.

"You're all right," declared the inspector. "Come back again when I have more time, Big Dog."

"I won't miss a day, Fat. I want to talk to the people that come over. They stop here, don't they?"

"Lot's of 'em, Big Dog. What you interested in?"

Big Dog, to use the name that stuck, shut one eye and looked inward with the other one, and spun a reply:

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"Seein' if they's any bigger question box than you be. Reckon that's even Stephen."

But you can't keep a secret from soldiers if you ever once hint at it in word or action. If they can't tell the truth they'll tell rumors, until the victim is forced to reveal a scrap of the real color in self-defense. Ask any army officer who has ever soldiered in the line, especially in a remote garrison.

Within forty-eight hours a fine big bush sprung up to the effect that Big Dog was laying for one Ocho, bandit soldier-leader of the north Mexico wastes.

The rumors included many possibilities—that Ocho had slain Big Dog's brother, his wife, his whole family, had tortured him; had robbed him of his cattle ranch, his gold mine, his last dollar. When somebody caught sight of a woman's picture in Big Dog's locker the rumor grew and waxed romantic.

Big Dog proved an exception to the rule and said little in self-defense. So it did not come out until later how nearly right the gossip was.

Big Dog soon discovered that the only difference between life on the outside and in the army is that in the army the rawhiding is more refined.

He did not allow, however, this fact to interfere with his fine sense of justice. He would find salt in his coffee. A false friend would whisper a name in his ear. The owner of that name would presently find salt in his coffee. Or perhaps it would be sandburs in the bed, powder in his pipe, weak leg in his chair, a trip to Captain Matthew's bachelor quarters for "right dress." Big Dog got even with them all.

The evening up with the man who sent him to Doc Courtney's medical dispensary for two veiled hints to clean rifles with was something of delight to the whole garrison. Flake was the victim. Doggetty sent him to a fierce and fiery lieutenant's garage with a pail of white paint just after the said fierce and fiery officer had discovered that some vandal had painted white streaks all over his new red roadster. The result to Flake caused Big Dog to think he had grossly overplayed his hand.

There are always men who can not distinguish between a joke and mischief. One of this sort dropped into the blacksmith shop to have a front shoe refitted.

As Big Dog held it in the white fire of the furnace, turning the wheel instead of depressing the lever of an old-time bellows, a white cat brushed against his legs, startling him. He kicked, and sent the friendly feline plunk against the adobe wall of his shop. He dropped horseshoe and tongs and rescued the cat.

"Aw, poor little feller," he crooned, gentle cat upon his shoulder. "Reckon I overdone it, overdone it bad."

While he was at this, Slim, the soldier with the wrong idea of a joke, quick as a magician hung the purple hot horseshoe on a rod with about a half-gross of new ones.

Big Dog looked all around for the shoe, then burst out at Slim——

"You hid that. I'll get even with you!"

He turned to the rack for another one, and took the first in the row—the hot one. He took it up in both hands testingly before the burning flesh registered. Then quick as thought he flung it at Slim. And almost as quick he had the soldier by the shirt collar.

"I'll show you!" he barked. "I'll——"

"Don't, don't, I didn't mean no harm," squeaked Slim.

Big Dog jerked him around at will, and threw him face down, and sat on him, and pressed his hands down on the smoking horseshoe until they were thoroughly burned.

"Now, blast ye!" he roared. "Go and show 'em Doggetty's justice. Eye for eye and skin for skin!"

Slim jumped on his bareback horse and yelling like an Indian scalper raced for the medical shack and Lieutenant Doctor Courtney. Big Dog followed behind.

AFTER this the men got to daring one another to try stunts with Doggetty. And the first one to fall into the trap with anything unusual was the troop barber. He clipped Big Dog's long bushy hair and left a scalp lock on top. The customer slid down out of the cane chair and looked at himself in the mirror.

"Hog a'mighty!" he bellowed, beholding the waving plume. "Did a man ever look so!"

He jumped for the barber, shouting that he wouldn't even leave "dander on yo' cokynut haid." But the barber went away from there then, and all that the aggrieved customer could do was to wreck the shop, which he did with Doggetty justice. He clipped the edges off the razors, scrapped the mirror, junked the mugs, and threw the

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chair out of the window, and dared anybody standing around to interfere.

"Say, look here," began Captain Matt twenty minutes later, "what does this wrecking business mean, anyhow?"

Captain Matt stood on the porch of the house that was bachelor quarters for himself and Doc Courtney, and the blacksmith stood down on the ground.

"I got to give back justice," Big Dog answered simply, not at all on the defensive.

He lifted his hat and displayed the miniature feather-duster waving like savagery on the blue-white field of his clipped dome.

"Haw-haw-haw!" roared Captain Matt.

Doc Courtney came running out.

"Haw-haw-haw!" he roared too.

"Haw-haw-haw!" bellowed Big Dog back in their teeth with sarcastic mockery. "He-he-he! You think it's funny, don't you?"

Captain Matthew and the kid doctor sobered.

"You can't keep this up, you know," Matthew said. "Wrecking property and injuring men."

"You're right," agreed Doggetty. "I can't keep it up very long. I'll turn peevish sooner or later and go to hurtin' 'em, cap."

"Ahm," went the officer in his throat. "Don't call me 'cap.' It isn't military."

"Don't you call me 'Say,' either. It ain't military."

The kid doctor snickered and went back into the house.

"But see here," protested the captain, whom the soldiers considered the most patient officer ever in any regiment, "this rough joking has got to be stopped."

"You bet," agreed Doggetty, fingering his scalp-lock.

"But I mean you."

"Me? Why, cap!"

"It's mean, criminal, small——"

"I'll say it is, but they don't seem to know any better."

Doc Courtney came back to the porch.

"You've got to stop it," said Matthew.

"But I can't let 'em go when they do me dirt. I *gotta* even up."

"Why?"

"Why? Why, it's—it's my way."

"But see here, Doggetty," Captain Matt went on, "it's petty, small. You're a man. You're too big for this sort of thing."

"Too big?"

"Too big," vouchsafed Courtney.

"Too big," repeated Doggetty as if he doubted his ears. "Why, I ain't big enough. I could easy stand six inches and a hund'rd pounds more."

Queer, drawn looks appeared over the faces of the officers.

"Go back to your quarters," said Captain Matt, and he followed Courtney into the house on the jump. A moment later Big Dog heard them explode into shouting laughter.

"Hog a'mighty," he thought, "they've took a sudden funny-bone. I didn't say nothin' to make 'em laugh."

Thinking of all that he and the captain had said, he went down to the one street of adobe stores and restaurants and business places and gave a Mexican barber a dime to clip his scalp lock. When the job was done the barber grinned and asked—

"Wet or dry?"

Big Dog spat in his face, and strolled over to see the immigration inspector.

"Hey, Fat," said he facetiously, "d'you think I'm too big to do—uhhh—my way, cent for cent and eye for eye?"

"Y'ain't big enough," Fat responded significantly.

" 'S'what I told him, the cap. He said I was too big for that kind of stuff, and says I, I could take on a hundred pounds yet."

"Well I'll be whaled!" observed Fat satirically. "I'll bet he laughed."

"Laughed? Why?"

Fat's body quivered like a jelly ball with mirth.

Big Dog heard again the guffaws of the captain and the lieutenant, and he knit his brows puzzling over what the laugh was about.

"Grease!" he sneered, to even up for the moment with Fat, and sat down on the porch by an elderly *paisano* from the Mexican side who had just come over.

"Well, daddy," said he in the vernacular of the *pelado* class, speaking like a native, "what are you talking about on the other side today?"

The old man sucked in his breath hissingly and looked around as if pursuers were at his elbow.

"*He* comes!" whispered the elderly one. "Ocho, the Butcher!"

"Whoooeee!" yelled Big Dog.

He began at once to see how much truth there was in the rumor, his low burning black eyes smoldering hotly. He was deeply disturbed, like an animal in a field that

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senses a coming storm and is anxious to seek shelter.

He talked with the ferry boat man on the river, who was the depository of all gossip. This man said that Ocho was coming, without doubt, but that he was two or three days distant. The little garrison in Alamos, he declared, was unalarmed, was making merry and showing their courage by getting drunk.

Big Dog went back to the barracks to collect his treasured personal possessions and get his big Colt's to be ready to go at any moment to even up with Ocho.

When he entered the great squad-room only two men were there, Flake and another, and they were on their knees before his open locker. He realized they had picked the lock, and the thought came and passed that he would gouge out their eyes.

The two men were heads-together looking at something Flake held in his hands. Big Dog tiptoed with animal lightness up behind them. The two were looking at the small photograph of a pretty Mexican girl, of soft eyes and sweet smile, a girl just turning into womanhood.

With something of the thunderous roar that is imputed to the ape, Big Dog leaped upon them. He seized them by the hair of the head and threw them apart arm's length, then he crashed them together. He flung one aside, and in the wrath of a madman took Flake by the collar and crotch, lifted him high up over his head and smashed him down on the floor.

Doggetty was down on his knees almost in the same instant that the body struck fumbling for the little cardboard picture. And when he got it in his fingers he hugged it to him as he had the white cat in the blacksmith shop.

At the hospital the word was given out that Flake had a fractured arm and three cracked ribs. At this the top sergeant sent Big Dog with a corporal to see Captain Matthew. Captain Matt had heard of the affair—he always did, quickly and in detail—and he met them at the porch. Doc Courtney and a civilian in prosperous looking clothes stepped out too.

Big Dog was not apprehensive. Cap would savvy. But he was touchy. His low burning eyes were quick moving, suspicious. He was like monkeys in a cage—slow to settle down after a disturbance, after one has had a fight with a stranger. His right hand kept plucking at the left pocket of his olive drab shirt, where reposed the picture of the girl.

Captain Matt was low in his mind. He shrank away from ruining a man. And this act of Big Dog's was high assault. It approached an attempt to kill. In a way Flake deserved what he had got, but——

He looked Doggetty up and down, and Doggetty felt himself being weighed and measured, criticized. To Matthew there was something fine in the square hulk, down under. If it could be uncovered——

"Doggetty," said he, "you're too big for this sort of petty revenge."

"Yes," acquiesced Doc Courtney, nodding.

And there all at once Big Dog comprehended what they meant. He knew why the two had gone hastily into the house and broke into laughter, why the fat inspector had quivered with mirth. They had been laughing at his stupidity. And that unreasoning wrath of a man at his superior took hold of him.

But the whole situation meant more than reprimand. It was criticism of his way, his very foundation of conduct.

Big Dog looked down at his huge fists and hairy forearms and knew that he could not even up with these two officers with such physical methods. He knew that his evening up must be some other way, knew that he must accomplish their utter ruin.

Too big! What a measly way of looking at things!

Captain Matthew shortly ordered him to the guard-house. It was curt dismissal, as Big Dog apprehended it, and his resentment rose still higher. He must get 'em and get 'em quick.

They put him in the big prison room of the adobe guard-house. The half dozen garrison prisoners were out at work. He shuffled back and forth, more like a perturbed animal than ever. With the wrath against the officers was the apprehension that Ocho might come and go while he was held here. At every turn by the window from which he could see the little mud-daubed hamlet of Alamos, across the Rio Grande, he stooped and peered through the iron bars that held him in—iron bars the size of his thick fingers, set deeply into the adobe.

How even up with Matthew and Courtney? It bothered him. Their offense was something new. It was intellectual, spiritual, of the mind. He did not outline this

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side of it, but he did get to see clearly that muscular punishment, or any common retort, would not make him even Stephen fifty-fifty. Ruin! Smashing ruin!

It was early February and warm, even hot. No glass, only the iron bars, closed the window. Big Dog got to shaking and twisting at them with just the edge of his strength when sentry Number One was not in sight. Few other soldiers passed, for it was two days after pay day and all who had money left were at the gambling place run by the half-breed Mexican called Cinco.

ALL persons who observe their fellows with an understanding heart know that there are men who have one marked fault or weakness, but are kindly, strong, fine and beloved in all other respects. Such a man was young Lieutenant Doctor Courtney.

Then there are men who are so consistently strong, and law abiding, and courteous, that when they run amuck people say, "I can't believe that." Such a man was Captain Matthew.

At the tail end of the day Courtney returned to the bachelor quarters that he and Matthew shared. On each cheek-bone was a round red spot the size of a dollar that betrayed his weakness. He looked into what had been used as the kitchen of the house, into the one bedroom, and making certain that they were not concealing a snooper, he drew from his various pockets crumpled and dirty paper money, and some silver. He put it on the littered table and counted it carefully.

"Seven hundred and seven dollars!" he said to himself in a whisper. "I'll trim Cinco tonight!"

He tied up five hundred dollars. He went to where coats and trousers hung on nails under a shelf, and he rammed an arm down one trouser leg and drew into sight five compact sheaves of new bills, each with a band about it marked "$1,000." The well-dressed civilian of the afternoon had brought it to Captain Matt, an unexpected inheritance. It had been a matter of sentiment on the Eastern lawyer's part to put cash into the heir's hands. He had expected to find a bank at Mariposa, or at least a quartermaster's safe.

Courtney dropped it back and his own five hundred in with it. Then he put the loose silver he had into a small black metal box on the table, where Matthew had put a few small bills. This was facetiously called their "bunco steerer," on the theory that a thief finding it would not look further and find larger amounts. As Courtney finished with this the captain entered.

"When you get back to proffing in the university," began Courtney briskly, and stopped, staring.

Matthew stood there with a silly grin, teetering on his toes, hands in pockets, campaign hat at a rakish angle.

"Drunk!" shot out Courtney in one tactless word of utter amazement. "I don't believe it!"

Matthew went sullen.

"Look at your own self!" he advised with an edge on his voice. "You're gambling again down at that half-breed's joint."

Courtney's face lighted with the glory of that story.

"Listen, Matty. This is my last time to gamble, tonight. Sure. I got Cinco on the toboggan this afternoon. I cleaned him. Over seven hundred dollars."

"You've lost twice that much to him."

"I know, but three times in the eleven months I've been here Cinco has piled up good-sized fortunes. I'll wager he has ten thousand right now, buddie. And three times he has hit an unlucky night and been cleaned. This is his unlucky night! He's coming back with plenty of coin. Other men are winning too."

"And you're playing with that bunch of half-breeds and squaw-men. And enlisted men too, that you ought not to be, an officer."

Courtney crossed the floor and got behind Matty and shook him by the shoulders and walked him to the treasure in the trouser leg on the wall. The doctor displayed his own five hundred, and drew out the five thousand and put it in Matthew's hands. The captain forgot his complaint.

"There's your cottage on the hill by the sea," said Courtney, "with the row of tall poplars behind it, and the university down below."

"To think," exclaimed Matthew, holding the sheaves out on his palm at arm's length, "that there, in that handful, is the fulfillment of a hope.

"Think! The cottage for the wife and kiddies, the home for us the rest of our days. I can go back to that dinky university job and we won't have to pinch and

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skimp to pay rent. We'll have a home, and the little fruit ranch with it. Why, boy, there's everything in that one little old unexpected five thousand bucks!"

"You've got to get it banked in Marpine tomorrow."

"It ought to be there now. That's what comes of soldiering seventy miles from the railroad and the bank, and having a sentimental lawyer bring your inheritance in cash. But it will be all right. I'll hit out tomorrow morning bright and early, if nothing turns up. The reports are that the bandit Ocho is near. I wish the major was back and in charge of his garrison."

"Why don't you hit out tonight with this money?"

"Couldn't bank it before nine-thirty tomorrow anyhow. Oh, it'll be all right. Let's leave it here and act as usual. Leave the door wide open. Nobody but you and I know about it."

"Oh, sure," agreed Courtney. "It'll be all hunkydory. Great Guns, old man, I'm glad for you!"

They dropped the money back into concealment. Matthew grinned again, teetered on his toes, there in the gathering dusk.

"I can't believe it!" Courtney said incredulously.

"Did it once before," said Matt, as if that were a fine excuse for this time. "Go' cockeyed rosy after the officers' training school, when I got my c'mmission."

"Don't believe it," said Courtney.

"Money-money-money. One of us ought to stay here all the—whass that?"

They cocked their ears, breathless. Afar off there arose the *plapp-plapp-plapp* of machine-gun fire.

BIG DOG, pacing the prison room, heard the first shots of the fight. They turned him frenzied. He paced the floor, shouldered aside the other prisoners from the window to peer out. He talked and muttered to himself.

Presently Captain Matthew, running past the guard-house, called out to the sergeant of the guard to have call-to-arms sounded. The military practise along the Rio Grande is, when there is fighting on the southern bank of the river, to have American soldiers out in force to warn the combatants to keep the bullets on their own side, and to prevent armed deserters and other undesirables from flooding across into the United States.

Big Dog heard the order, heard the captain fling back over his shoulder—

"Ocho has come!"

Big Dog got a knee and shoulder against the steel frame set into the adobe, and began to heave and twist and grunt. The other men got back in awe. He was like a gorilla.

"Blood for blood," he grunted. "Life for life!"

He threw all his compact muscular force against the bars. He strained. In an instant of breathless silence a low, dull grinding of sun-baked brick began, and all at once the bars shot outward, Big Dog with them.

Outside he picked himself up and ran away from the guard-house and garrison, straight southward toward the Rio Grande. A voice somewhere shouted clamorously. Two shots cracked over Doggetty's head. He leaped into the mesquite brush.

When Doggetty got into the chaparral he slowed down and took time to do a bit of thinking. It was full dark now. The splurge of gun-fire across the Rio Grande had already become desultory. From what he knew of Mexican fighting he felt that the firing had been a sort of how-do-you-do, and that a pretty stiff fight might be expected at daybreak.

Moreover, he was unarmed, and to hunt Ocho as he had in his heart to do he must have a gun—a good gun, of heavy caliber, and sure of fire. He spat viciously. And he kept fingering, through his shirt pocket, the little picture that was safely wrapped away there.

As important as anything else, almost, was that he had not squared the deal with Matthew and Courtney.

"—— 'em! They—they——"

He stammered at the thought he could not frame as to how they had insulted him. It was the growing unreasoning of a man who can not adequately cope with the thing that has hurt him because he does not comprehend the thing. It was the hate of ignorance for that which is more powerful than it.

A streak of cunning led him to go sneaking back to the officers' quarters. They would look for him, without a doubt, but they would never think of looking at the captain's house. He might be able to even up with them, might get hold of a good gun, and he could get back to the river and cross over before daylight.

The house was dark. He sat down on the

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dry, hard ground under a window that was raised about a foot. His head was just below the sill.

And he sat there for an hour without impatience, listening to the sounds in the night. He believed the soldiers were searching for him along the river. Or perhaps they were after Mexicans. For occasionally there was a shot. And twice a "Halt!" was called loudly.

After an hour or so he got up and walked around the house, and sat down again. The desultory firing across the boundary faded out altogether. One detachment of soldiers returned to barracks. Pretty soon he heard footsteps approaching. They went to the door, a light was struck within, and Big Dog, peeking under the nearly drawn shade, saw Captain Matthew put the match to the wick of a kerosene lamp.

The captain took up a package he had laid down and unwrapped a newspaper from it, exposing a common quart whisky bottle without a label. It was filled with a clear liquid. Matthew tilted it back and swallowed three times. Then he blew out his breath, made a face and shook his head—spluttered a bit. He sat down and looked into space with a sort of grin on his otherwise sober face.

Big Dog was tempted to shove up the window and enter and use his fists. But such a procedure did not satisfy him. Besides, Courtney was not there.

Matthew arose and went to some clothing hanging on the wall. He reached into a pant's leg and drew out sheaves of money. Big Dog watched with stopped breath, and savage, low burning eyes. The captain thumbed the stuff, tossed the bundles up and caught them, all but one that fell to the floor. He rescued that and put it back with the others in the impromptu pocket.

Big Dog licked his lips and drew away lest his peering eyes attract the officer. He looked in once and saw Matthew taking another pull at the bottle. Then he heard him leave the house.

Doggetty was exultant. Here was a way to even up with Matthew. If Courtney were only in it somehow.

Then Courtney entered the house. He entered stealthily, for Big Dog was not aware he was there until he heard a match struck. Peeping in he saw the doctor at the cache. Courtney took a sheaf of money and left.

Big Dog remembered hearing the "medico" called a nut for gambling. He had no doubt but that Courtney had gone to Cinco's place. And almost before he thought he could have arrived there he was back. This time Big Dog heard him approach, heard him steal in, saw the match flare and another sheaf of money drawn out.

Instinctively he felt that here was a situation which would turn out to his benefit. He had hours and hours yet before coming day would demand that he get across the river and in concealment. He sat tight under the window.

Presently Captain Matthew returned. He lighted the lamp again and took a drink. He struck his hand into the cache and satisfied himself that the money was safe. Another officer knocked at the door, entered. He asked about a troop disposition, and Matthew answered him drunkenly. He went away amused.

The captain swaggered around the room. He was evidently trying to see how straight he could walk. He laughed a great deal, a drunken giggle. Than all at once he flopped down on the bed.

Immediately afterward Courtney entered. He was ill at ease at the presence of Matthew. His face was flushed a high crimson.

"How'r you and Cinco a—a coming?" asked Matt. "Thish certainly memorable night, hey? All this money in the house. Five thousan' bones!"

"*Zsssst*" warned Courtney. "Be careful."

"Five thousand mine and seven hundr'd yours. How much more have you won, boy?"

"I'll clean Cinco dry yet!"

"Five thousand for my house—home for wife and children. Good children. Windfall. Means ever'thing. Heir of uncle. Good uncle. Five thousan' for me and——"

"*Zsssst* Matt, they can hear you over at the barracks."

"Isss nothing to be 'shamed of!"

Matthew dropped back on the bed, blew out a great, drunken sigh and closed his eyes in sleep, it seemed, for in a moment or two Courtney whispered—

"Matt! Matt!"

And when there was no reply he took another package of bills and hurried away.

Big Dog made certain no one was about and entered at the half open door, as the dwellers therein had done. He gained his bearings, blew out the light, and found the

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cache by the sense of touch. Three packets of money remained. He searched carefully. There was no more. He struck a match to see the amount. Each packet was marked "$1,000." He stuck them into his shirt front, picked up an automatic pistol and belt Matthew had thrown off, and stole out into the night.

The outside "army" did not attack the one inside of Alamos at daybreak, as Big Dog expected.

He lay on a slight eminence down-stream from the little mud town and watched another day come on. The soldiers that he expected to attack only cooked breakfast at several little fires. American cavalrymen, through whose line he had slipped without much difficulty at the darkest hour—because after all they had not tried to sew the line up tight—continued to ride the bank and wait for action.

At sunrise the handful of men that Big Dog watched with the thought that he would make out Ocho at their head, mounted and rode down to the river to water their horses. Doggetty lay so close that he could all but hear their talk. And when they moved away he observed one of the men conceal himself in a clump of mesquite.

When the others had ridden quite out of sight he approached the hiding man stealthily and called out to him—

"You do not go."

The *soldado* jerked around, pulled his revolver half from the scabbard, saw the American uniform, looked surprized.

"What are you doing at this place?" he demanded.

"I crossed over to see a friend with your army."

"So?" the man puzzled. "By what name?"

"Ocho, your general."

The man laughed shortly, and pointed to Alamos.

"Ocho is there," said he. "The man who leads my comrades there—Hinojosa—retreated from Alamos last night at the first shot and Ocho, the brave, went in. I would not follow Hinojosa all over Mexico. I go, if luck favors, back into Texas tonight. I belong on that side, señor."

"And Ocho is in Alamos now?"

"Now."

Big Dog set himself to wait. He believed that he could not enter Alamos safely until night.

When the Americans riding the river bank made out that the outside "army" was departing they returned to their barracks, leaving one sentry riding the long post.

Big Dog and the Mexican soldier talked at length, each giving the other information—or so it seemed. Big Dog sent the Mexican down the river to cross over in the night, hoping thus to get rid of him. And he believed the Mexican had spun a tale of the same texture in talking of Alamos. But he knew he had obtained some valuable information and was satisfied.

Some traffic set in on the river—the usual thing in two or three rowboats and a barge. This was for the purpose of trade. About midforenoon Big Dog saw a soldier—American—stealthily leave the chaparral on the north bank and go to one of the row boats as it was about to pull away. After a moment of negotiation the soldier obtained passage in the boat and they set out.

Big Dog was puzzled. Was somebody coming for him? The boat was half way across when another American soldier, on foot, ran into the open on the north bank and began to shout and gesticulate. He looked like Captain Matthew, and Big Dog was practically assured of this when he let loose with a string of shots from an automatic or revolver. The captain still drunk! The shooting was interrupted by two more soldiers catching up with Matthew and interfering.

The effect of the shots was to cause the two boatmen to abandon their trip straight across and slant down stream to make greater speed. They presently landed some distance below where Big Dog lay in concealment. The watcher had already seen that the soldier passenger was Lieutenant Doctor Courtney, and he could guess well at the story, since by twisting his knees a little he could feel three thousand dollars worth of the trouble inside his clothing at the bagging of the knee.

The soldier with the gun, on the Texas side was led away, evidently by fellow officers. And the pair of boatmen headed their craft back to the other shore, which was convex and offered quieter water to work up stream. Courtney began to walk slowly upstream toward where Big Dog lay.

It was obvious the doctor was sick at heart. His face was white and drawn, and he walked with dragging feet. There was a stir of pity in Big Dog's heart as he saw

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how well he had evened up on this man whose very trend and habit of thought was an unforgivable criticism of Doggetty's way of life.

It was a fine-drawn thing that had come to Doggetty, and now it was like a dog one has seized by the scruff of the neck—he hardly knew what further to do with it.

"Hello, doc," he called presently, in a subdued voice. "Set down on that rock natural, doc. I'm Doggetty. I want to talk to you."

Courtney, startled, staring, did not make out Big Dog at once, lying full length under the low brush, but when he did, he collected himself and sat down naturally.

"You!" he said.

"Was that Matthew shooting at you?" Big Dog demanded.

A groan of assent was the answer.

"What happened?"

"He—he got drunk."

"Dew tell!" Big Dog chuckled thickly at the youthful tragedy in the doctor's voice.

"He's wild, too," Courtney added, and then because he was a kid and was bursting with tragedy, and Big Dog was at least a human being, he spilled the story—put out all his cards and, in a way, threw himself on the older man's hands.

"He got some money yesterday. Five thousand dollars. From an uncle. It meant everything to him. Home, family. And last night I got to gambling at Cinco's. My failing. Everything else goes out of my mind. And I took the five thousand and lost it."

"Took it all?" asked Big Dog, incredulous at the admission, knowing that he had three thousand.

Courtney shook his head heart-brokenly.

"I didn't realize it at the time, but I did."

"What you goin' to do?"

"I don't know. Join the Mexicans up here. Go on into Mexico."

Big Dog, watching the boatmen, saw them talking with other Mexicans on the boats. He knew that before long somebody would come from Alamos looking for the man in uniform from the American side.

"Listen," said he. "You go on to Alamos. They'll treat a doctor white. Nothing to be afraid of."

"Sure."

The youngster was listless.

"Don't say anything about me," continued Big Dog. "I'll go in tonight. And I'll hunt you up, see?"

Courtney nodded. Nothing much mattered. But Big Dog understood that he would not snitch.

Doggetty looked the slender youth up and down, not harshly but his eye for eye proclivities were abated not one jot. Even at this instant he swiped in a huge fly that had hit the back of one hand and pulled off its wings.

"I'll hunt you up tonight," Big Dog repeated.

Courtney understood he was dismissed. He got up and stumbled on, a broken youth.

THROUGHOUT the hot day Big Dog starved and thirsted under the greasewood bushes. He could hear the water lisping on the sand, so close was he to the river bank, but he would not endanger his precious chance of getting to Ocho by impatience to drink.

A hundred times he went through imaginary scenes with the cross between a bandit leader and patriot, sometimes ending by breaking all his bones, sometimes by shooting.

Now and then he looked at the picture of the girl, and reverently kissed the pictured face.

Flies bothered him and he spent much time swiping at them to catch them and break off wings or legs. He wished he could even up with the sun somehow, better than by lying under bushes. And often he thought of what the captain and the doctor had said.

"Too big!"

And his anger would rise, like the hackles of a dog when it hears a sound but can make out nothing alive.

With the first coming of blue-grayness, made by the shadows of mountain, he crawled out and drank, and by the time all the stars were out he was sliding under a table in a Mexican woman's shack half way up the hill to Alamos to a meal of fried eggs and boiled brown beans. Afterward he went on.

By the edge of the adobe houses of Alamos he heard three or four men cursing horses along a picket line. Three or four houses were lighted. Music was going in one, on guitars, and in another there seemed to be a gambling game around a table. Here likely would be Courtney, he thought,

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and he kept out of the long bar of light and made his way to a window.

Courtney was there. But the rest of Big Dog's guess was poor, for the doctor was not interested in the gaming. In fact, he sat by the open window, slouched down listlessly in a chair. Big Dog whispered to him—

"Come outside!"

Courtney swung his feet to the sill and slid out of the window, unnoticed. When questioned he told where Ocho was, and how to find the house. Deciding quickly, Doggetty requested Courtney to go back down the hill to the shack of the Mexican woman.

"I'll likely want to talk with you purty soon," he said.

He wished to have Courtney where he could lay hands on him when wanted. He was not decided yet how to finish with the doctor. And his interest in the matter was not paramount at this moment. Ocho was the man now! He struck out for the Mexican's headquarters.

In the powdery moonlight the *casa* of Ocho was not difficult to find. It was the only white-washed house in the village.

Big Dog, gun in hand, opened the first door questingly. It was lighted within by a bright kerosene lamp setting high on a clothes press, or wardrobe. And off to one side, where the light fell clearly, was Ocho, head of the "army," primping before a small, quirky mirror.

The general looked around in an angry flash, and froze in that awkward position, a hair-brush above his round, half-bald head, and a triangle shape to his mouth. Ocho was the first to make a move. He swallowed throatily.

Big Dog entered, closed the door, and set his back to it, all as silent as a crouching cat.

"The Grizzly Bear!" suddenly chattered the Mexican.

Big Dog made no answer directly to that. He had things of his own to say, things he had taken a long time to decide upon, and he was not to be swerved.

"Three years," he said. "This month."

Ocho licked his pinched lips.

"So-ho," he said, trying for a step or two to strut, "you've come back for your *enamorada*."

"At the mines in Santa Clara," Big Dog went on, in a kind of dignified *pelado* Mexican, "I paid court to little Bonita, and you paid court to her, you the leader of the company of bandit-soldiers. And she chose me, the Grizzly Bear.

"She was an angel, sweet as the mountain flowers. The first woman to kiss me after my mother. I kissed her lips once and was ashamed of my sins. Once she ran her fingers through my hair, and that night I prayed to her.

"We were married in the church, with the people all around shouting good luck. And as we marched down to the street, she a-hold of my arm, you and your men rushed in on your wild horses, and you took her up behind your saddle, and I never have seen her since."

Before Ocho could answer, and as if it were a period to Big Dog's story, the inner door opened and a woman stood there, a woman of indiscriminate age, slightly more than plump, frowzy headed, oily of face, slattern of dress. Across one shoulder, on its belly, was a naked baby, and clinging to her skirts was a little black-tinted youngster, uncombed and unwashed. She moved forward one, two wondering steps.

"Doggetty," said she without emotion except surprize. She smiled ever so slightly.

"Your goddess!" muttered Ocho.

Big Dog had long relinquished her. His thought was whetted for the man. His low burning eyes had been smoldering volcanoes. They burst into eruption now as he flashed out at Ocho, pointing the gun, ready to fire. Only the slightest of impulses in Big Dog lay between being and not being, and the Mexican knew it.

All at once Ocho turned craven. He dropped to his knees, his hands out in supplication.

"Spare me! Give me my life!" he begged hoarsely.

The hair-trigger wrath of the big man did not abate but seemed to increase.

Ocho, on hands and knees, began to retreat sidewise, whimpering for mercy. Saliva dripped from his open mouth.

"Spare me, spare me, *señor!*"

Big Dog caught sight of the woman's face. On it was the faint beginning of an awful contempt for the slinking worm.

And all at once Big Dog did not wish to kill Ocho. It would be unworthy the strength of a strong man to slay this weakling.

In the same instant it came to him what

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the two officers had meant about his being too big. He *was* too big, too much a man, to kill this whimperer. The revelation was simple, comforting.

And he understood then just what to do to even up with Matthew and Courtney. It made him eager to get away.

Backing from the room he closed the door after him. He knew that Ocho would not recover for a moment or two. He doubted that an alarm would be given. The Mexican would have to settle this thing with the woman.

He turned off at the picket line to get a rope that his new plan included. He got it from the neck of the nearest horse. A sentry spoke to him about the time, and he answered satisfactorily.

Courtney was waiting at the woman's house. And a Mexican was there who had just come over from Mariposa.

"The captain," he said, "is going it high, wide and mighty. With a gun he marches up and down the street searching for him." The informant nodded to Courtney. "They say he is mad. All fear him."

Big Dog received this information with much interest, learned that the Mexican was speaking of an hour before. He asked Courtney to step down the hill a way, saying he had something important.

When they stopped, well out of the hearing of the house, Big Dog dropped a loop of his rope over the doctor and in a flash had his arms pinioned. At Courtney's surprized struggle, that was quickly checked, and to his questions, Big Dog chuckled:

"You go back to the captain. I carry you back hog-tied and flop you down in front of him. He shoots you. You're a goner, and they hang him. I'm even Stephen with the pair of ye!"

"He'll shoot me all right," vouchsafed Courtney, and said no more.

Big Dog shouldered him as if he were a sack of meal and started riverward. Once he stopped to rest, and in the moonlight, sitting on the ground with his knees up he stared for minutes at the girlish picture.

Then he scooped out a little bowl in the loose sand and shale and buried the picture. For the heartbreak of it he might as well have buried the girl herself on that day when he left the church.

He went on with his burden. A boat was found. He gagged Courtney. On the Texas side he evaded sentries, and in an hour from the time he left Ocho he was at Matthew's door.

A light burned within. The officer sat on the bed with his head in his hands. Big Dog knocked with his free hand, and waited. There was no response. He became irritated, standing there with the kid doctor on his shoulder. In abrupt determination to even up for Matthew's lack of courtesy, he kicked out and sent the door crashing open. He strode in. Matthew got up, seized his gun in alarm. Big Dog laid his burden on the floor.

"There he is, cap," he said. "Heard you was wanting to shoot him."

Matthew's bleary eyes fired up with red wrath, and he actually did half raise the automatic in his right hand.

"Nothin' doing," said Big Dog, brushing him aside. "You're too big for that."

Big Dog released Courtney, gag and rope, and helped him to his feet. The officers and erstwhile friends regarded each other in mixed emotions. Again Matthew half raised the gun.

"Tut-tut," scorned Doggetty. "You're too big for that. You ain't small and little in your mind. You birds kiss and make up and I'll surprize you some more."

All at once Matthew threw the gun on the bed and reached out a hand for Courtney and the kid doctor said—

"Matt!"

And then Big Dog reached down into his breeches' legs and drew out three packages of money.

"There's three thousand of the stuff," said he. "You can dig up the other out of your pay, doc."

They looked at him, trying to say something. Big Dog hit for the door.

"Reckon that's fifty-fifty," he said. "Even up."

Outside, where the shadows were thick under the chinaberry trees, a protruding branch caught Big Dog's shirt and gouged his skin. Savagely he started to snip the branch off, then checked himself, and a kind of amazement spread through him.

"Hog a'mighty!" he thought. "I wonder if I've got to quit doin' this?" He let loose of the branch, reluctantly. "I'll—I'll have to ask Fat."

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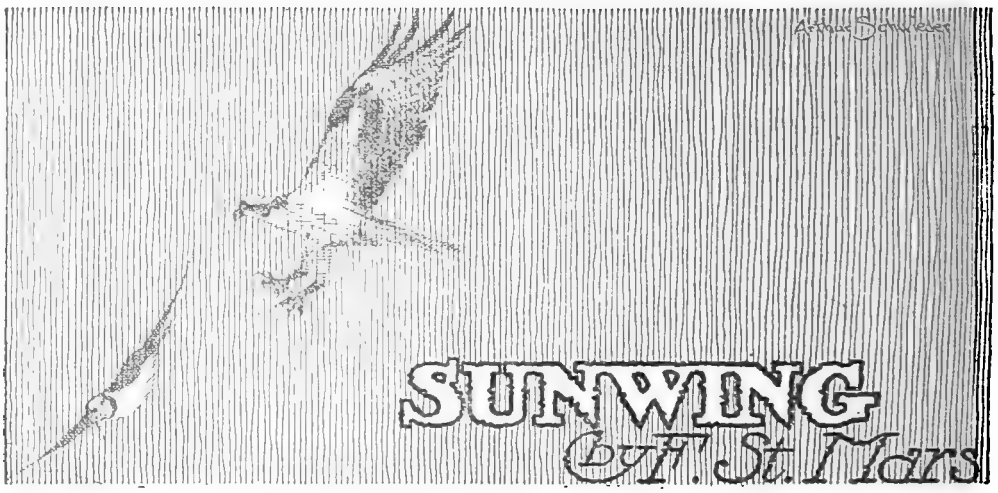

Author of "The Furies," "De Profundis," etc.

NO ONE seemed to know why his parents, who were children of the sun, should have chosen for him and his two sisters and two brothers, the very darkest spot for a cradle that they could discover.

As he looked over the edge of his mud and straw-plaited cup-nest, lined with feathers, gummed both against and upon the farthest rafter in the dimmest corner of the cow-shed, he saw that even at midday his world was a narrow shut-in world of shadow, of semi-dark and deeper dark, lit only by the amber burst of sunlight that peered in at the open upper half of the door, and through which, at suicidal speed, his mother or his father shot in to feed him.

Now, however, he was looking out with new eyes and an unwonted restlessness. Any one would have said that, as young birds go, these had—all of them—been ready to fly for the past week. So they had, if they had been any other birds but swallows. Other birds are launched partially complete, to be fitted up gradually afterward; but young swallows take the air full-rigged and ready to put to sea, as it were, at once.

It is doubtful if he had ever liked these lurking shadows. Those eyes of his, which were destined to pierce the leagues, had always been turned doorward with longing, and shadoward with fear. Any horror, he felt, might come out of them upon him at any instant.

Something *was* moving there now. He heard it rustle. Horrors! He could see two glassy, green lights, small enough but of an unutterably cruel glitter, switched upon him from some dim fortress under the thatch—and then, as his father first, and then his mother, hurtled in with a ringing double twitter, as swiftly switched off again. They were the eyes of a rat.

His parents stayed no more than two seconds, to feed their young, not long enough to perch even, and in a breath were gone again.

After that, however, there was no more rat—or if there was, the young swallow was too fast asleep in the warm and cozy nest, lined with feathers, to notice it—till he awoke, many hours later, with a jerk, to the awful consciousness of noise and battle and sudden death!

Like all wild creatures, he was fully awake, master of his faculties, and ready to jump anywhere, or "freeze" where he was in one and the same second. He took no more than one instantaneous photographic look at the shark-like snout and wedged yellow teeth, the long hand-like forepaws of a rat, at his mother's and his father's wide-open beaks and at their beating wings—all mixed up in one terrifying heap.

A wan streak of dawn was stabbing in at the open window, but he did not see it. A lark was climbing an invisible wire to heaven, singing mysteriously in the half-light outside; but he did not hear it. He saw and heard only the vermin rat, the "bogy man" of the swallow nurseries,

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and he knew only sudden overwhelming, thoughtless terror.

He toppled himself over the side of the nest—he was gone—and his panic-stricken brothers and sisters, seeing him thus vanish, hurled themselves after him. Anything, they felt, was better than being bled white by the chisel-toothed ghoul of the night.

Many feet below, just as he almost touched the broad back of Daisy, the old shorthorn with the white face, the swallow recovered himself, shot out his wings and barely forked tail, and, to him, miraculously and astonishingly leaped upward in the gloom, out of the window, into the cool dawn air, in a second! Before he knew it, he found himself shooting aloft into the glorious sky, twittering to meet the sun, whose golden swords were even then rending the mists. His brothers and sisters were with him, twittering around.

In a few moments his father and mother, somewhat disheveled, joined them as well. He knew not that he had saved the life of one, if not both, of them, by setting the example to his brothers and sisters to take flight, and so relieve his parents from the necessity of fighting for them; nor did he know that his mother had already chosen this dawn for his "launch."

It was sufficient for him that he was in the air—the air that his being fulfilled, and that his long, dagger-pointed wings, which had only been a nuisance in the nest, proved useful for something. Nor was he in the least amazed that, from the word go, unlike other young birds, except the swifts and the martins, he could fly, and fly well, and that his nearly thirteen-inch wing-span—for which his tiny body, only five inches long, was no more than a connecting link—did not wrench him to pieces.

He was too much amazed and delighted by the light, the swirling dawn-mists, the stabbing sun, the gliding trees and roofs—and the sliding field-carpet beneath—to trouble about anything else.

And then—and then—he had just time to realize that his mother had screamed a sharp, quick cry, quite different from all her other cries, insistent, alarming as the scream of a woman, and just time to fall, skating breathlessly and perilously sidewise around the nearest chimney-stack, which leaped to meet him, ere the streak that had changed in one breath from a speck against a piled, snow-white cloud mass to a simitar-winged, clean-cut bird, drew up with a swirl, and whirled away into the landscape. That bird was a hawk, and may or may not have meant business; but his was the figure and the livery of death, and—well, one could not be too careful.

PERCHED upon the rain-water gutter—with his fellows all a-row, three apart, two together like love-birds—the swallow took his first preen after flight, learning that a swallow should preen almost any time that it is not flying or asleep. In fact, that he could not preen too often, for a swallow's feathers are what the engine is to the aeroplane and must be constantly "gone over" even if nothing really wants doing to them.

Perched thus, now his creamy chest lighted by the sun, now his dark blackish back—in some lights it seemed almost dark "shot" green, like cock's feathers—the swallow, whose other name was Sunwing, could see his mother coming—every forty seconds she, or her mate, fed them! Among a racing, tearing, darting, veering crowd of other swallows, he could pick her out, and began to clamor to her.

Yet if a swallow darted upon him over the roof-angle, was upon him and gone again so quickly that it seemed impossible to distinguish, he made no mistake and not a sound, nor opened his beak, nor gave the slightest sign of recognition, nor indeed moved any part of himself except his head, which was never still—watching everything.

He seemed to be there for one purpose only—but he got a nasty jar when he insisted upon climbing into the rain-gutter instead of on it, and there met a house-mouse, come, apparently, for a drink, who nearly snapped his head off—and that purpose was to catch his mother's eye. It was not easy.

She shot up, or down and up, at forty miles an hour, and stopped dead straight on end, suspended in nothing, her wings fluttering; her beak opened before his, beak to beak—but they never seemed really to touch, though they may have done so. Something passed from beak to beak—indeed you could see a tiny fly's wing fall, glistening in the sun—and she was gone, leaving him with a beak stuffed full and gulping. In two seconds, aye, and it may have been less, this wonderful piece of

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juggling took place, quite in a matter-of-fact way, once every forty seconds, sometimes every twenty.

Who says birds don't live? Why, they *burn!* Their life is a white-hot electrification of energy personified. Yet when they are still, few warm-blooded creatures can be more utterly quiescent. They call "being still" the reaction in the bird world—usually the "sunning reaction," for they prefer it in the sun. Some move no more than a stone. Others simply lie out and take themselves to pieces, as a few women of India can massage an invalid, muscle from muscle.

All at once a sparrow appeared upon the rooftop with that sudden, silent boldness which a sparrow can assume when he is up to no good. When the starling is not by, the sparrow is the tyrant of the roofs, and is hated accordingly.

Instantly Sunwing, and his brothers and sisters, fell from the gutter so absolutely at once, so amazingly together, that it looked as if they had all been tied together by an invisible thread. Nor did they go back. The sparrow seemed to have inspired as much terror as the hawk, though he flew away directly they had left.

IT WAS some afternoons later that Sunwing discovered the wheat, that smooth, green-gold and silver-gold sea that stretched purfled with gentle waves, away and away, level with the hedgetops almost, winking with flickering butterflies—tortoise-shell of the pure browns, her grace my painted lady, peacock of the royal purple eyes, blue of the sky, and my lord high red admiral—who tossed, one after the other, over the breeze-blown crests, or settled in companies in the thin places, where the sensuous poppies pouted blood-red lips at the amber sun, and pigeon-blue patches marked where the ring-doves were delving down under, after the vetch seeds.

Here indeed was a place to live and to fly in—forever! Heat overhead. Heat underneath. Heat caught and held among the wheat-stems, and never a patch of shade for a quarter of a mile—just heat, and sun, and air, and glaring sky—a swallow's paradise!

Sunwing was so enchanted with it that he forgot about his family, forgot his mother with her long, two-pronged, forked tail (he lacked the two prongs himself as yet); forgot his father of the rusty throat; forgot everything except the joy of flight, and the heat, which was to him life. Flying with great rapidity—some one has computed it, by timing released marked swallows away from home, at over one hundred miles per hour—he was soon lost to sight over a rise in the ground.

Myriads of flies were hovering in the sun, simply asking to be chased; but newly worked muscles, which have never been used before, can not draw Euclid propositions about the hot air at a hundred miles an hour without complaining, and the young swallow came to anchor rather suddenly upon a single polished telephone wire, that ran, straight as a ruled line, from nowhere to nowhere athwart the fields.

He found considerable difficulty in staying upon the wire—a difficulty, by the way, which swallows of mature age seem to get over—and he was balancing and seesawing uncertainly and uncomfortably, opening his long, thin wings occasionally to maintain equilibrium, when a white and tawny bird with a swart cowl, the whole not much bigger than a lark but smaller than a song thrush, flew up from somewhere—the top rung of an old hurdle stopping a hedge-gap—and alighted upon the wire not two yards from the swallow.

Sunwing's first impulse was to remove, but though young swallows' wings strengthen with the rapidity with which a newly opened leaf hardens, they are rather weak at first, and the long flight had tired him. Moreover, the bird, with his cream breast, his gray hood, his tawny beak, his white patches, and his black "points," looked so entirely innocent, and sat so quietly, that Sunwing's suspicion gradually evaporated.

There was none of the obvious pugnacity about him that there was about the "plug-ugly" sparrow, and when Sunwing twittered, and the new arrival answered his twitter in almost exact duplicate, his qualms rather vanished.

Presently the bird sidled a little closer to Sunwing, but so stealthily, so unobtrusively, that the swallow, whose attention was taken up with balancing, either did not notice him, or failed to trouble if he did.

A swift, three swifts, came racing and tearing, screaming wildly as they came, in an abysmal dive over the wheat, and took Sunwing's attention for a moment. A lark

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rose out of the green-gold wheat as a puffin rises out of the sea-depths, and caught his eye. And—when Sunwing looked again, the bird with the gaudy uniform was perched almost beside him.

Sunwing half-opened his wings with surprize, and—with a pounce, quick almost as the pounce of a cat, the bird, claws first, beak next, was upon him.

Sunwing side-slipped for his life—instinct told him that it was for his life. He had not been out of his nursery long, but he knew that. And if he had not been the most lusty member of his family, if he had not been from the start always a day ahead, so to speak, of the rest, he would in that moment have lost that life. As it was, the bird's clutch slid through the flight feathers of his right wing, and the bird's beak hammered his upper wing coverts instead of his skull.

Sunwing continued to side-slip till almost touching the wheat-ears. Then he "flattened out" suddenly, described a zigzag like a black fly, and whizzed aloft almost as perpendicularly as a rocket, leaving the other bird behind—he had avoided falling into the corn rather cleverly, that bird, and shouted hoarsely and harshly "Wark! Wark!" after the swallow, which sounded very much like obscene abuse, and probably was.

That bird was a red-backed shrike, and men have not nicknamed him "the butcher" for nothing, nor do the French call him *l'écorcheur* for love only.

We speak about terror lending people wings. Sunwing had wings already, remarkably long and pointed ones, which is the hall-mark of speed.

But terror nearly lent him the power to make himself invisible through speed. One instant you saw him balancing on the wire. The next instant you beheld him falling therefrom sidewise. The next he was not; nor could any scanning of the sky find him. There was only empty, hot silence, and the evil genius of the place, the shrike, looping to his old hurdle-top, to await another victim!

SUNWING'S return to his home was startling. He shot down from the sky at the speed of an arrow, still uttering his peculiar little *wheet-wheet* of terror—he had come all the way at the gait of a high-velocity bullet—and clapped down on to the top of a high chimney, where he lay, rather than perched, panting from head to tail, in silence—panting, one had almost thought, his little heart out.

There was something in the nature of the shrike's traitorism—in his mimicking of Sunwing's voice; in his stealthy, sneaking way; in his stab-in-the-back methods—that terrified Sunwing. Perhaps the terror was prophetic. A very large number of swallows who die upon migration are killed, must have been killed for centuries, by the shrike, though mostly the woodchat shrike in this particular connection.

The thing was so unnerving. The foe was so gay of color, so soft of voice, so small, so like many other small birds of the hosts of small birds, that one could never tell, Sunwing now felt, whom one could trust. The episode shook his confidence, for he was not yet old enough to believe in Kismet, as the mature birds do. He had trusted—and his trust had been betrayed!

However, his mother did not seem to care, nor his father either. They came back gaily from fly-hunting round the moving cattle in the meadows, among a party of half a dozen other emancipated old swallows. His father was singing a love-song of the cyprus swamps as he came—apparently he had forgotten all about his children, and was thinking of the next brood.

But his mother swooped on him, low down, almost touching him with a light caress, as it were a kiss, as she passed, and with a twitter of good cheer.

"Be brave," she seemed to call to him.

Perhaps she noticed his condition, and with a mother's eye understood. But she made no attempt to feed him, or to remain with him, or to show that she thought he must do anything else than fend for himself. Instead she shot into the cowshed door and vanished from sight. She too had her main thoughts centered upon the next brood.

Then it was that one of those strange things befell, which sometimes take place once only perhaps in one Summer, perhaps not at all.

Sunwing had just become aware of a strange, prophetic warning, as it were, in his bones, a sort of internal shiver—for birds can foresee weather conditions days ahead in an odd, almost uncanny manner—when without any warning at all other than that given by a racing dim cloud, no bigger

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than a man's hand, in the clear sky, a sudden strange hissing filled the air, sweeping toward Sunwing. Rapidly it increased as it came till with extraordinary swiftness—before he in his inexperience had time to shelter or brace himself—it was upon him—a raging blast of wind that hit the tall chimney-stack with an almost audible smack, and made it quiver.

For a moment the world was filled with one tremendous raging inferno of wind, roaring trees, banging doors, whirling leaves and dust, crash of overturned things—hurry, flurry, whirl and confusion. Then it had passed, that wind, rushing onward in its narrow path, and a moment later could be heard breaking against the straining oaks as storm-seas break against cliffs.

It had come in seconds, a miniature hurricane, and in seconds it had gone! Sunwing had gone too—vanished from the light of day in a breath. He was, when the blast caught him; but when it had passed, he was not. Where, in all that sun-washed space of earth and trees and roofs and air and heaven, had that little bird got to?

Sunwing was wondering the same thing, as a matter of fact, as he fell head first, the center of a little avalanche of soot, half-choked, more than half-blinded, fluttering, flapping, clawing—with considerably more rumbling and noise than one would have believed possible—down, down, down, through pitch darkness, down—*bang! Thop!*—into an empty fireplace. Bounding and tumbling out onto the floor of a room, he—arrived.

The sudden gust that had taken the corrugated roofs off two sheds, overturned one fowl-house and snapped off a damson tree, drawing a path as straight as a ruler and scarce wider than a field, had blown Sunwing down the tall chimney.

A child screamed and fled, banging the door shut after her. A cat said "*Sssphttherrr!*" and fled, too, between the child's legs, all but upsetting her—and Sunwing was left to himself, bouncing about in splendid isolation, and in solitary confinement—for the window of the room was shut—to pick himself and his senses up out of the soot of years and begin flying about with crazy abandon.

Any other bird would have bolted headlong to the window and nearly had brain fever from the resulting impact. Sunwing did nothing of the kind. Nor did he hopelessly, helplessly and pathetically flutter up and down the window, as do other birds when similarly trapped.

He did not even touch the window at all, though he flew straight at it. Instead, he swerved, lightning quick, just at the very last moment, just when it seemed as if he must bang into it, as if the very tips of his wings had almost—not quite—touched the glass.

This he continued to do, sweeping and swooping, fluttering, diving, and darting round the room, always just avoiding charging into the window, and frequently half-pausing by the empty keyhole, till it seemed evident that, as with bats, some magic must live in his wing-tips—some marvelous sense of touch that enabled him to feel things before he collided with them.

Then a girl entered—a kindly girl, with a walnut-colored face, black hair, dark eyes, and a flaming red handkerchief round her throat. She smiled as she saw the swallow, and her teeth gleamed in the subdued light like cut ivory. Then she threw open the window, and instantly and unhesitatingly—and of course at quite forty miles an hour—Sunwing, with a twitter vibrant of joy, shot out.

He was gone in the snap of a finger.

THERE was a maze of apple-branches and pear-twigs in front of the window, a perfect death-trap for flying birds, and to be threaded only with great slowness and care. Sunwing went clean through that, zig-zagging, twisting and twirling, like living forked lightning, without check, without death, without a scratch or so much as the loss of a wing-feather—and still at about forty miles an hour or more.

Then Sunwing brought the house down, so to speak.

The action had been planning in his brain, perhaps all along, perhaps half-unconsciously all through the day, because of the feeling in his bones, and the prognostication of coming "weather." It only required the hurricane-like gust of wind—and the really shocking débâcle down the chimney—to precipitate it.

Once clear of the branches, clear up into the heavens he shot, on glancing, knife-blade wings, faster and faster, and yet faster, a gleaming dart. And as he went, he screamed back behind him a strange and piercing

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call, a shrill and pea-like whistle, a sound you will not hear a swallow utter every day, nor every swallow.

His two brothers and his two sisters, resting all arow on the telephone wires, heard him, and answered him—his call acted upon them like an electric shock.

Other young swallows, perched all arow upon other telephone wires, and upon the lightning-smitten branches of an immense and ancient pear-tree, also heard him, and they answered him; and upon them, too, his peculiar call acted like an electric shock.

All together they rose, following him, thin, long wings twinkling in the sunlight, little bright eyes gleaming, little forms darting, little beaks twittering—up and up and up, into the eye of the smiling sun and the golden heavens. Up and up and up, dwindling from birds to flies, from flies to specks, and from specks to—nothing.

They never came back.

Perhaps today some man near Jaffa, or somewhere, walking over the wild heather, disturbs without realizing it many insects from the dry stems, so that they rise, and are snapped up by a swallow—or it may be five. That swallow follows him, and follows him, for what reason he knows not perhaps. Who knows but that maybe that swallow is Sunwing, gay as always, gentle as ever, a very living fairy incarnate of the air?

Author of "Rra Boloi," "The Last Cartridge," etc.

I LEFT M'Laubi at moonrise and headed southeast, back down the road.

There was not a puff of wind stirring; the night was oppressive, stifling, wrapping one about like a hot blanket. I strapped my coat over the pommel and rode in an open shirt.

A short lope broke the sweat out wet along the pony's neck, so I let him pick his own pace, lighted a pipe and resigned myself to a long slow night of it.

The waning moon crept leisurely up a clear sky, the Cross and a few bolder stars blinking on her far outskirts.

Over the east, in the moon's wake, one wisp of cloud lay like a silver feather.

The track snaked on and on through the eternal *mopanis;* every bare tree flung a network of shadow on the sand so that the pony walked a road of black lace.

An unreal world, deathly still, etched in black and white. Now and again a bird whistled in the bush, covertly like a hidden conspirator; a jackal's bark went echoing among the rocks of a dry *sproot,* then silence got the night by the throat again and there was no sound but the monotonous *plud* of the pony's hoofs.

At midnight, as I judged it, I off-saddled the pony and turned him loose.

Then, prone on the saddle blanket, I pulled at my pipe, watched the Cross tilting over the south and meditated on things

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STROUD'S IS IN RHODESIA

present and future. An hour of this and I saddled up and took the trail again.

I saw dawn flush the east with pearl and amber and nodded "Good morning" to the sun as, tossing from him a quilt of gold cloud, he leaped from his bed behind the M'tengive Hills.

At nine o'clock or thereabout I heard the cattle lowing in Bieewa's kraals and rode out into the bush clearing where stands Stroud's store. A police horse, bobbing to its knee-halter, trotted up and fraternized with mine.

Stroud and a white policeman were in front of the store hammering at a packing-case. Stroud, as immaculate as ever, nodded to me and went on hammering.

The policeman emptied his mouth of tacks, said "How'dy" and tapped the packing-case significantly.

It was a plow-case; they were lining it with cheap trade limbo. That only means one thing in our country.

"Who is it?" I inquired.

"Greeling, the prospector out at the 'Phœnician'," the policeman answered. "Blew his lights out last night in there," pointing toward the back of the store.

Stroud nodded.

"—— of a mess," he grunted and resumed his hammering.

"Why?" I asked.

The policeman shrugged his shirted shoulders.

"Search me, better ask Stroud here. I only got here at dawn myself; bound up-road I am."

Stroud cleared his throat.

"Why? Blessed if I know why; 'e didn't leave any literachoor expressin' 'is sentiments. Got fed up with it I suppose. 'E'd been up and dahn with fever all along and the Phœnician pinches out on 'em. 'E got dahn-'earted, I suppose, so bites onter a gun and takes a cheap ticket for Elsewhere. Made the —— of a mess of my store, but these blokes never think of that."

He sniffed aggrievedly and commenced to tack another yard of limbo into the plow-case.

"I'm glad you've come," said Wrench, the policeman, "because you make a fourth and we can handle him decently and make up a game of bridge afterward."

He screwed his head sideways to better survey his handiwork.

"Pity it's got 'VIA BEIRA' painted so big on it. I remember when we planted old Gilbert up at N'gami his box had 'KEEP AWAY FROM BOILERS' plastered all down one side—couldn't help smiling. Can't we paint this out, Stroud?"

"No time—'e won't keep fresh much longer this weather."

He turned to me.

"Go in an grab yerself some breakfast. You'll find Halloran, the bloke's partner, in there. Talk to 'im a bit, keep 'is mind occupied; 'e's just woke up an' wot with a sore 'ead an' this yer bit o' news 'e ain't quite 'isself. Talk to 'im a bit, 'e'll be drunk again in an hour an' then it'll be all serene."

I off-saddled the pony who rolled luxuriously in the sand and then hobbled after the police horse in the pursuit of grass.

Then I entered Stroud's "scoff" hut in the pursuit of breakfast.

The dead man's partner, Halloran, was seated at the table, his chin in his hands, a half-emptied cup of Colonial brandy before him.

"Morning," said I, but he took no notice, sat staring at the broken egg-shells in his plate.

I pulled up a chair, cut myself some bread, a hunk of bully beef and got to work. A native cook-boy brought in some hot coffee, which he poured out for me,

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retrieved an empty "Dop" bottle from under the table and went out again.

Halloran was still staring at the egg-shells. He was a rough-hewn bull of a man with dark hair and mustache; the sun had burned him a dull-brown, his open shirt displayed a matted chest with a little black scapular dangling thereon. His face gave one the impression of good features gone wrong, clean lines blunted and coarsened out of shape. The eyes that stared at the egg-shells so fixedly were bloodshot a rusty yellow, the effects of sun-glare and overnight drinking.

Presently he lifted his heavy eyes and looked me full in the face. I was just thinking that the man must be stone-blind, when he started backward in his chair, overturning the cup of brandy.

"My ——, where did you drop from?"

"Good morning," I said. "I've just ridden in from M'Laubi."

"——, but you gave me a jump! How long have you been sitting there?"

"About five minutes."

"Never noticed you—thinking of something else, not up to the mark this morning, somehow."

He paused to hiccup gently and brush some flies from his ear.

"Heard about him, Ben?"

I nodded.

"Bloomin' knock-out, ain't it? A knock-out I call it—thirteen years that bloke and me's been together, thirteen years together and then without a blasted word he goes and does it—this morning at dawn—leaves me here in this —— deserted Never-Never without a blasted word. Thirteen years!"

His voice faded into a mere mumble interspersed with hiccups, his fishy eyes had again fixed in an unseeing stare.

I finished the bully beef and went on with bread and jam. Outside the hammering had ceased.

Halloran woke up again, lurched to his feet and produced a fresh bottle from a case at the back of the hut.

"Haverdrink?"

He poured me a stiff dose and refilled his own cup, spilling a quantity over Stroud's snowy table-cloth in so doing. Maroon Stroud on a desert isle and he would conjure a table-cloth from the sand and iron creases in his pants with a hot stone.

"Here's fun," said Halloran, tipping more liquid over his chin than into his mouth.

"Good luck," I responded.

"Thirteen years and not a blasted word," he mumbled hoarsely. "Both from the same country, me and him—both Queenslanders." He jerked a thumb in rough direction of British India. "Came out here with the 'Bushmen' in the war, been together ever since—River Diggings, German West, North-Western, Congo, all over. Did pretty nicely here and there and lived like lords. Did —— rotten now and again, then we went on the 'Wallaby,' humping our blueys.

"Share and share alike all the time, and now, this morning, he sneaks off on his lonesome and does hisself in—leaves me here stuck with all the boys to pay and —— knows what in front. The yellow cuss! Well, good riddance (hiccup) say I, he was easy beat, but I ain't; takes a lot to break my blooming heart (hiccup)—my oath it does—havernotherdrink, (hic) ole man?"

Wrench put his head inside the door.

"Come on you fellows, we've got him boxed, let's get the planting done before it gets any hotter. Do you hear me, Halloran? Come and lend a hand."

"Eh what—what say? Oh, righto—coming!"

HE STARTED up and shambled outside where he stood blinking and reeling in the sun.

"Where's your hat, man? You'll get sunstroke. Jimmy, get his hat for him."

I found a dilapidated tile under the cupboard and with some difficulty got it on his head. Stroud armed with a couple of pick-handles stood beside the plow-case; Wrench, M. C. by virtue of his uniform, issued directions.

"Stroud and I'll go first, you and Halloran behind; put the pick-handles under each end, so—take hold—see? Halloran, pull yourself together, man, 'tisn't far, only round the corner. Ready? Lift!"

Halloran lifted with a jerk that nearly wrenched the pick-handle from my grasp, staggered a bit, found his feet and we commenced to forge slowly ahead; followed at a respectful distance, by a mob of sightseers from Bieewa's Stadt, wondering what fetish drives the white man, not prone to labor on other occasions, to handle his dead from first to last with his own hands and none other.

We made a rough passage of it at the

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back end, Halloran stumbled and lurched so violently that it was only with the greatest difficulty that I kept the plow-case from crashing to the ground. Stroud and Wrench stepping decorously in front, shot annoyed glances over their shoulders, but Halloran was far past noticing them.

Half-way, he suddenly groaned and let go altogether. I just managed to catch the box-end with my knee and one hand and lowered it to the ground with some decency.

Halloran sat on a rock breathing heavily, the sweat dripped from his chin in a continuous trickle.

"Drunk as a nowl," Stroud commented.

"Full to the neck," said Wrench, borrowing Stroud's handkerchief and wiping his forehead with it.

"Here you, play the game; only another hundred yards. Don't let it drop again for ——'s sake, or you'll have him popping out; screws aren't too tight."

Halloran reeled upright, without a word, groped blindly for the pick-handle and we rocked forward once more.

Two store-boys vaulted out of the hole they had been digging between two white crosses that marked the last camps of Stroud's predecessor and a hunter who had got entangled with a lioness, and, pulling their shovels clear, joined the distant spectators.

Halloran found a tree in the background and leaning up against it closed his eyes.

We three took our hats off.

"Got a prayer book?" Wrench inquired.

"No," said Stroud.

"Know the words either of you?"

We shook our heads.

Wrench scratched his chin and looked toward Halloran.

Halloran was asleep.

"I know a bit of the Lord's Prayer, I believe," said Wrench doubtfully.

"That'll do," said Stroud, "say that."

" 'Shun!" We stood to attention and Wrench got through with the Lord's Prayer, with only two hitches.

There was an uncomfortable pause.

"Say something," whispered Wrench.

"Then shall the body be committed to the deep," said I, which for the life of me, was all I could recollect at the time.

"You Stroud."

"Amen," said Stroud, which was all he knew.

Nobody could remember anything further appropriate to the occasion so we considered the service over and filled up the grave. The native spectators drifted back to their huts and we turned to leave.

"Wake up that big stiff," said Wrench and Stroud did so with a pipe-clayed toe.

Halloran rose laboriously, blinked and blundered after us toward the store; he had dropped his hat again. Stroud went off to do business with a few Kafirs that squatted about the store door and I laid me down on the floor of the "scoff" hut and called up deferred sleep.

Wrench sat at the table composing his report.

Halloran lay sprawled over the rough settle snoring like a cross-saw in split wood.

The fly-hum sounded like a great kettle boiling over; outside the heat waved in a film above the brown *mopani* tops and the sun beat the white sand into a blinding dazzle.

"Scratch, scratch," went Wrench's pen; Halloran snored and groaned; the flies droned, tickled and swarmed all over my face and neck. Wrench threw me a month-old number of the Bulawayo *Chronicle* with which to cover my head and I slipped into a troubled doze.

Stroud came in for lunch, mopping the sweat from his face with a silk pocket-handkerchief. Halloran sat up but ate nothing at all and took to staring at his plate again.

After the meal Stroud went back to the store to make up returns, bridge being out of the question as Halloran couldn't have told the King of Diamonds from the Queen of Sheba. He started to burrow in the brandy-case once more, but Wrench headed him off.

"Half a minute—one or two things I want to know."

Halloran dropped into a chair and regarded him sulkily.

"Deceased's name Ben Greeling, eh? Partner of yours?"

"Aye."

"Any effects—property of any sort?"

"Half-share in six pack donkeys, two tents, some drills, hammers and picks, blankets, one Mauser rifle and—and that."

He nodded his head to where the fatal revolver lay on a side table.

"What's his share worth?"

"When I've sold the outfit up, squared

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Stroud here and paid the boys, there'll be about enough to see me to Bulawayo. That's all."

"Any relations—Greeling?"

"Got a sister married to a hair-dresser in Adelaide—never heard of any others."

"You'd better write to her then."

"Who? Me? Me write?"

"Yes, of course, it's up to you, you were his partner."

"——! What'll I write—'Ben has shot hisself dead'—like that?"

"No fear—don't want to let the woman know he did for himself, you fool. He was mining; say 'killed instantaneuosly by a fall of ground.' Always rig up some yarn in these cases."

Halloran considered for some minutes.

"Look here, ole man, I ain't no scholar, *you* write the letter and I'll copy it out and send it—to oblige me, old man, I ain't no author."

"Good enough." Wrench pulled a sheet of paper and plunged again into composition. Efficient person, Wrench. Released, Halloran dug up a fresh bottle and set it going. He was taking it neat by the half-mug now. Presently he got lively;. he wound up Stroud's gramaphone and sang hoarsely two bars behind the music, thumping false time on the settle the while. A sloppy love song reduced him to tears. Another drink combined with a Sousa march and he waxed vainglorious, a captain of Fate.

Took a lot to break his blasted heart, he said, couldn't be done, no sir. A man who shot himself was a cur, a yellow dog. Ben Greeling was a yellow dog—bit of dirty weather and he takes a short cut out of it—no heart. "Phœnician" wasn't the only —— mine in the country, he knew of others that wouldn't pinch out, not in a long day. Let us but watch him and presently we'd see him going home lighting cigars with five-pound notes. The white ants would get Ben Greeling. Then he turned slowly over on the settle and was asleep again.

We did not wake him for supper, it would have been quite unnecessary: I eased him of his boots and Stroud propped his head up on some folded blankets; except for his shattering snores he lay like a dog. When the first peep of moonrise glowed over the east like the glare of a bonfire the policeman saddled his horse.

He gave me his report to post at the railway, picked up his reins, toed his stirrup and jingled away into the dark.

Stroud got me some blankets and I bedded down on the floor of the "scoff" hut.

The haggard moon labored up the hot sky, she seemed white-hot herself.

Away in the native "stadt" the tom-toms beat for rain—thump—thump—thump—thump—a monotonous unending thudding that throbbed in the brain like a heavy pulse.

HALLORAN lay face downward sprawled over the settle groaning in his dead slumber.

I threw off my one blanket and lay a-top prickling with sweat from head to foot.

Thump—thump—thump went the tom-toms with maddening monotony.

The gaunt moon slid higher and higher and was lost to sight above the open door.

Thump—thump—thump——

I awoke to a rough shaking and found Stroud standing over me clad in pyjamas and slippers.

"Hey you—wake up! Where's Halloran?"

I sat up.

"I don't know, isn't he here?"

He was not, the settle was bare.

Stroud scratched his tousled head and then pounced across to the side table.

"The revolver's gorn! Quick for ——'s sake!"

I kicked into my boots and followed him outside.

Stroud was talking excitedly, had fallen back on his native Cockney.

"Didn't think 'e'd come rahnd till termorrer—where in —— 'as 'e got ter? 'E's all ter pieces—'e's got the bloomin' revolver too—'tain't there any 'ow. Aw —— these chaps! Whist, what's that?"

He pointed into the trees.

I saw a figure, dim in the moonlight, disappearing through the bush in the direction of Greeling's grave.

"Halloran!"

Stroud jumped into a run.

"Come on, quick."

He raced ahead panting out a running plaint about the dearth of plow-cases and there being too much of a good thing.

Snapping twigs and scattering pebbles, we must have made a considerable noise, but the man ahead never turned or faltered but blundered steadily on and disappeared behind the spur of a *kopje*.

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"Sprint!" Stroud gasped.

I did my best but longer in the leg than I am he rounded the rocks well ahead of me.

I jumped a rock, crashed into a thorn-bush and out again, tripped over a log and fell against Stroud's outstretched arm.

He gripped my shoulder and pulled me beside him. "Hist—look!"

The two crosses gleamed white in the light of the old moon; across the freshly turned mound between them the figure of a man crouched double.

"What's up—what's he doing?" I whispered.

"By Jinks—I believe—I believe the big stiff's prayin'."

THE PACKET RAT

by Bill Adams

'OW WOULD *you* like to be a packet rat,
Wiv no place anyw'ere to 'ang your 'at?
Wiv two bare feet 'most bleedin' froze an' wet,
Aboard a packet wiv 'er tops'ls set?

'Ow would you like to sail the greenin' sea,
Wiv a black 'urricane a-pipin' free?
An' 'old the wheel-spokes in your freezin' 'ands,
A-footin' furrows down for foreign lands?

'Ow would you like it, when ashore you goes,
To see the folks a-drawin' back their clo'es?
Sayin, " 'E is a sailor—'orrid thing!"
'Ow would you like to 'ear that sailor sing?

Singin' upon the sea some tropic night
Wiv the old moon so shiny silver-bright?
A shipmate's fiddle twinkin' merrily
To cheer the hearts o' sailors far at sea!

'Ow would you like to see a shipmate drown,
Under goose'd tops'ls in the Easting down?
To 'ear 'im 'oller: " 'Elp me—'elp me! *Gawd!*"
'Ow would you like *that*, eh?—"*Man overboard!*"

I'll take my lot! I'll live a packet rat,
An' shake the tops'ls loose an' wave my 'at!
Give me my sea, my pals w'at never knows
W'en death goes walkin' as the night wind blows!

Give me my sea, an' I'll give thanks to Gawd
For ev'ry wave that lops 'is 'ead inboard!
A-thankin' 'im for breath, an' 'ands to bleed.
I'll be a man, by ——, the rat's 'ard creed!

"*The Packet Rat*," *copyright*, 1922, *by B. M. Adams.*

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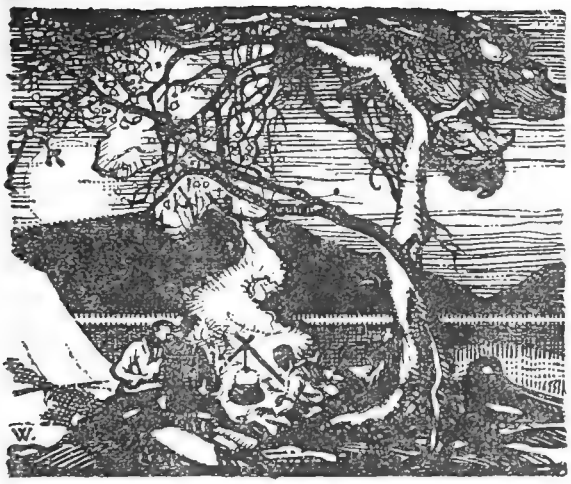

THE CAMP FIRE

A Meeting Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

SOMETHING from Max Bonter concerning his story in this issue. The story came to us last Summer, so his debate about the frogs is a year old:

Kent, N. Y.

It is a rather faithful picture of the Wintry hazard that confronts an ore-carrier on Lake Superior. The shifting of a cargo of ore caused by gathering ice is a deadly menace to navigators of this lake. This contingency could supply much material for the long "*spurlos versenkt*" chapter of naviology.

The construction of an electro-magnetic apparatus such as described is perfectly simple and a little band of desperate men could accomplish it in less than an hour.

I'm in a shack on the shore of Lake Ontario—swimming, paddling, chopping wood—living like an Indian. At first the bull frogs seemed to resent the intrusion of my flute into their Nocturnes; but they've evidently become philosophic. Still, I shall never really know whether their monotonous "*kplung*" signifies execration or encore.—MAX BONTER.

IS THIS the largest Navaho rug ever woven? Dr. George A. Still, president of the American School of Osteopathy, of Kirksville, Mo., ordered one from Arizona that is fifty feet long by about a yard wide and that some say is the longest, if not the largest, Navaho blanket ever made. Dr. Still would like to get the real facts on this point and appeals to you of Camp-Fire, saying, "I know of no other publication that

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could unearth the correct data on this proposition better than *Adventure*."

The squaw who made it is said to have put in 278 days on it and the design is said to be one of the most intricate ever seen in Navaho work, depicting a long chapter of Navaho history. C. R. Williamson, of Houch, Arizona, through whom the rug was ordered, states that several of the old chiefs say it is the longest Navaho blanket ever woven. Who can give the final facts to Dr. Still?

SOMETHING from E. E. Harriman concerning quick drawing and Los Angeles thirty-six years ago:

Los Angeles, California.

Camp-Fire Brothers: *Re* the remarks of comrade John Joseph of Weiser, Idaho, on the quick draw, take note of this:

Dick Halliday, Santa Rita, Grant County, New Mexico, wrote me last month—"Missed a chance to win a five-spot. Laid a white poker-chip on my right hand, arm extended level. Offered to bet our sheriff a fiver that I could tilt my hand, drop the chip, draw and fire two shots before the chip touched the ground. He refused to bet. I have won many a five-dollar note by that means."

Is that fast enough?

BUT when you get down to cases, did any gunman ever beat a real knife-man on the draw? I knew a man named M. V. Sanchez in this city thirty or more years ago. Talking of knife work, M. V. asked me to strike at his nose and do it at my best speed, getting my hand home to guard instantly. I did so and he had a Spanish knife against my neck before I had more than got my arm straight.

Then he told me how his father made him and his brother practise daily, with round-pointed wooden knives, from the time they were ten.

TWO Mexicans in this town had a blood feud. One went into a saloon on North Main Street. The other waited at the door with a Colt 38. When number one came out, number two opened fire. Every shot tallied. Number one drew a knife, lunged in and carved number two. Result, the knife-man recovered from five bullet wounds, but the gunman died on the spot, slashed into ribbons.

AGAIN, a redheaded, burly, chain-lightning fighter of thirty-six years ago, whom I met under strenuous circumstances, had no fear of a gun. He charged this same Sanchez, first mentioned, dodging as M. V. fired. As the sixth shot was fired he leaped in. M. V. flashed his steel and redhead threw up his hands:

"—— you, Mike! If you'd stick to the gun I'd beat you up, but —— your knife, I don't like it!"

M. V. was a mounted policeman, with a warrant for redhead.

I met redhead when I meddled in a fight and stopped a case of mayhem, half completed. One man out, two badly used up, one ear halt chewed off. Redhead informed me that it was none "of your—— business what Bill did to that feller's ear." Also, he, with four of his mates, promised to take me apart right there. Colonel Colt saved me an unpleasant experience. I had a brick wall at my back, to keep it.

M. V. WAS in court one day, a man of about 140 pounds. A German wrestler, weight 280, ran the worst joint in town. A policeman went after Theodore with a warrant. He came back whipped, minus star, club and gun. Two went and came back in a wagon, worse off. M. V. volunteered to serve the warrant. Cocked his hat over one ear, grinned at the judge and lit out. Smallest man on the force. Came back with Theodore, handcuffed.

The German dove for him when M. V. said he had a warrant. Got his hands on M. V., but the little man had his right hand past the wrestler's left armpit like a flash, holding his knife with blade up his wrist. Stuck the point about an inch into Theodore's fat back and the German clawed for the clouds. M. V. snapped the cuffs on him and took him up to court. Just to be spectacular, M. V. kicked Theodore down the room to face the judge. A devilish little hornet of a man. But the soul of kindness and good-nature ordinarily.

Say, I could write such anecdotes all night. This was some woolly town, in spots, thirty-six years ago.—E. E. HARRIMAN.

HERE is something about masters-at-arms, written in December. Also, an informal Camp-Fire Station in Constantinople. Every time I cut out of a letter before giving it to you the words "have read *Adventure* since the first issue" or "for ten years" or "for five years," as I have in this one, I feel as if I were depriving Camp-Fire of something that ought to be passed on to it—an evidence of its permanent hold and of loyalty to it. I suppose I've cut out thousands of them and it's a shame. But if we printed them all it would make our Camp-Fire sound like a self-praise meeting and we surely don't want that.

U. S. S. *Scorpion*.

In reading your 20 December, 1921, issue, I believe I have been shipmates with R. de S. Horn who introduces himself to the Camp-Fire in that issue. I was at the Naval Academy in 1912.

FOR those who may be away from things I pass on the information that there is quite a bit of fighting going on in Anatolia (Turkey), and possibly some of them will be wanting to get into it. As for what is going on in Russia, a right thinking man would hardly wish to take part in it, even though there would be quite an element of danger in going into it.

At the present time I am on duty ashore in the city of Constantinople, but officially attached to the U. S. S. *Scorpion*. This is surely the spot of the map where after-war conditions have made the largest change over those of pre-war times, some things going on here being almost unbelievable. In ten years service in the Navy, one year of National

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Guard duty at home, spending two days to two months in many varied places in the States, I have never seen or heard of things that I have *seen* here, and five years of my Naval service has been in foreign countries and of course for the entire period of the Great War. It is easy to get into "adventure" or intrigue here, but —— hard to get out and more or less embarrassing.

MAY I criticize Horn a bit? There has only very recently been a dreadnaught in the Asiatic and since that time, and even before, the rating of master-at-arms in the Navy has been abolished. This was needed to fill in his story, but the Navy changes constantly and this is one of the changes.

In regard to your Stations, it would be a privilege to establish one here, but the duty performed prevents me from displaying any sign. This would naturally detract from the original idea of the scheme, but to those who might be aware that some one in Constantinople is acting in that capacity, I will be pleased to give all the service possible. Also as the service requires sudden movements, this Station could not be permanent, but, in case of my detachment from this duty, I would endeavor to secure a responsible man to act as such. The city address would be care the American Embassy.—J. D. MONTGOMERY, Chief Yeoman, U. S. Navy.

Now Mr. Horn's reply. The last part of his letter harks back to a letter from one of you hopping on him for something in one of his stories that seemed to reflect on amateur radio-operators as a nuisance. The letter stated that they weren't. Since then Mr. Horn and I have been noticing in the newspapers, like the rest of you, that even if Mr. Horn's words were a reflection on these amateurs it would seem amply justified by facts. Of course, many amateur operators are above reproach, but there are enough of the other kind to constitute both a nuisance and a danger.

Hollywood, California.

Thanks very much for letting me see Mr. Montgomery's letter, which I am returning herewith. It is nice to find people with an interest in what you write and I thank him for writing in to correct what seemed to him an error in regard to the master-at-arms rating.

AS A matter of fact I was aware that the old business of having a master-at-arms in every ship's division had gone out of service. I remember when they went out, and I remember 'em before they went, and a tougher, harder lot I've rarely met. In fact, there's quite a good story that's going to be written sometime about a certain night in Boston when the crew of the *Georgia*—at least it's supposed that the crew was responsible—started in to wipe out the master-at-arms rating unofficially and plumb ruined several husky specimens before the authorities (and the masters-at-arms) got wise. They were called "Jimmy Legs" in those days.

But a few of the old masters-at-arms (mostly chiefs) were still kept on the roll. For instance the *Arkansas*, if I remember aright, had one whose job was to look out for court-martial cases and brig prisoners and the like. And only a day ago an electrician from one of the Subs told me there was an old chief master-at-arms still walking around the submarine base over at San Pedro. However, I will bear Mr. Montgomery's words in mind, as I might otherwise lead my readers into a mistaken idea regarding the rating.

OF COURSE this is all rather technical, but here is the plain English of it. In order to prevent interference certain definite wave-lengths are prescribed for the various classes of stations and sets. Amateurs have to stick to the short 360-meter wave. Battle-ships and government stations, as I remember, run on a wave around 860 or so. High-powered long-distance sets are given quite another wave-length. And *broadcasting* (use of a tuning that will register on receivers set to any wave-length whatever) is reserved for highly important messages, such as *storm warnings*, *distress signals* and the like. Getting off your own wave-length is as bad, radiorally speaking, as driving an auto up the left-hand side of the street; but deliberately broadcasting without authority is like tampering with the fire-alarm apparatus or cutting the wires to the police stations. And the amateurs know that, or they ought to know it!

As I said, I don't mind being criticized by fellows who are interested in the story and who criticize because they want to set the author right—like Mr. Montgomery, for instance. The more there are like him, the better stories we are going to turn out. So please let me see all the kicks on my stuff that come in.—R. DE S. HORN.

IN OUR February 10, 1922, issue we published "Smell o' Shark," a short story, sent to us by Ramon Stone Bradon of Fort Worth, who stated, "I have tried to picture the danger that divers sometimes find themselves in." Letters began coming in from our readers stating that the story was a plagiarism. We investigated at the library and found that it certainly was. It was copied, almost without a change, from "Beneath the *Bulldog's* Bilge," by T. Jenkins Hains, a short story published in *McClure's* for August, 1905, and afterward published in 1908 under the same title as in *McClure's*, in a book of stories by T. Jenkins Hains, entitled "Bahama Bill," issued by The Page Company, Publishers, of 53 Beacon Street, Boston, at $1.50. The Page Company are successors to L. C. Page & Company, Inc., and to Dana Estes and Company, and the book bore the imprint of L. C. Page & Company, Inc.

In another issue we printed a story, "Frozen Luck," which also came to us from Bradon, though originally under the title "The Cache." So far we've not been able to fasten any charge of plagiarism on this story. "The Counterfeit," "The Triumph

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of the Under Dog," and "God's Country" were three other stories sent to us by Bradon but rejected by us.

WHEN our readers detected this plagiarism and informed us I wrote to Mr. S. S. McClure of *McClure's* and to The Page Company, after verifying the plagiarism, giving them the facts and of course offering our apologies for unwittingly printing a story already published by them. I also wrote Bradon—on January 13, January 18, and January 26. I received the following:

Adventure:
Sirs, the mistake is mine.
I leave for Mexico tonight.
(signed) "Ramon Stone Bradon"

The above was undated, but its envelope was postmarked January 23, at Fort Worth. Note his use of quotation marks on his signature.

My letter of January 18 came back from the post-office authorities stamped "Unclaimed from Fort Worth, Texas." The later letter was not returned and the earlier one was evidently the cause of his one letter of response.

There seems to be some doubt as to whether Ramon Stone Bradon is his real name. Whether he went to Mexico is also an open question.

I looked up our checks sent him in payment for these two stories. That for "Smell o' Shark" bears the endorsement "Ramon Stone Bradon, Route No. 5, Box 178-A Fort Worth, Texas," and the further endorsement "Pay to the Order of National Bank of Commerce, July 28, 1921, 103 Fort Worth, Texas, 103—W. C. Stripling Company." Also the stamp "Pay to the Order of any Bank, Banker or Trust Co. 37-22 July 29, 1921. Previous Endorsements Guaranteed. The Continental National Bank of Fort Worth, Texas."

The check for "Frozen Luck" bears the following endorsements: "Ramon Stone Bradon, 1223 Denver Ave., J. E. Goode;" "Previous Endorsements Guaranteed, 37-20, May 10, 1921, Security State Bank, Forth Worth, Texas." Also a fourth endorsement enclosed in the outline of a heart in red ink, but illegible except for the word "Dallas" at the bottom.

From this data we did what investigating could be done at long range, but so far without results. Also I shall be grateful to any of you who live in Forth Worth and can shed any light on the subject. Among other things, has any of the local papers printed anything on this case?

I may add that the letters received by us from "Bradon"—except the one given above—bore one or the other of the two addresses given in his endorsements of the checks and our earlier letters seem all to have reached him at one or the other of these addresses.

NEEDLESS to say, we regret having given our readers a plagiarized story, but I hope it is also needless to say that our first suspicion of plagiarism did not come until our readers wrote in. No fewer than sixteen of you detected the plagiarism and told us about it. I'm pleased and proud to say that fourteen of the sixteen were the kind of friendly letter that makes an editor feel glad he's alive. Of the two others, one merely registered a protest and the other trusted that if we were aware of the facts we'd explain why we printed it and that, if we were not aware, we'd take steps to "guard against the recurrence of this rehash." I suppose the last could be called a "nasty one," but I don't think the writer meant it to be so. His trouble was that he didn't stop to think. Since there are some others who have the idea that magazines on the rare occasions when they print a plagiarized story do so deliberately, I ask them to do a little thinking and revise their opinion.

In this "Bradon" case our correspondence with him and our checks on the same scale we pay for original stories will convince any doubting Thomas that at least we didn't profit financially from buying a plagiarized instead of an original story. Our yearly receipt of thousands of manuscripts will convince him that we could not have been urged to it from lack of original material to choose from. Certainly the story in question was not bought because we couldn't get plenty of others as good; indeed, we hesitated over buying it because of its semi-fragmentary nature. Incidentally, we rejected more of this man's stories than we bought.

Just *why* would we or any other reputable magazine consciously plagiarize any story? What profit is there in it? Even if the magazine itself stole a published story, thereby saving the cost of buying it from a

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writer, the cash saved would be a small item compared to the ill-repute following the almost certain discovery of the plagiarism. A magazine's good name among its readers if far too valuable an asset to let it be damaged for the sake of saving the price of dozens of stories. Even if we in the office were crooks, we're not such fools and idiots as to publish any story we know to be plagiarized.

I WANT all of you to understand this plagiarism business fully. Every magazine is likely to be fooled into buying plagiarized stories. There is no man alive who has read everything that has been printed. There are seven of us on the staff, but there are no seven men in the world who have read everything that has been published, or even remember clearly everything they've read. Let our seven most captious and superior critics take the job of selecting manuscripts and at the end of a year tally the number of times they've been caught by a plagiarism. If during that year we've been caught once, I'll venture they'll have been caught at least three times and possibly far oftener.

Also, consider the facts of the past. *Adventure* has been running for nearly twelve years. During that time we've been caught by just three plagiarisms, one story parts of which were plagiarized, one rehash of an author's own stuff sold us in the mistaken idea that we realized it was a rehash. If there have been more than these, they have not been detected by either you or us. During that same time we've detected and kept out of print many times that number of attempted plagiarisms—three or four, I think, within the last month. It is not a record to be ashamed of for those twelve years.

Needless to say, a writer once detected in plagiarism never sells us another story.

SO I ask the few kickers among you to have a little common sense even if they can't have any charity or entertain any but the blackest suspicion of the morals of us in the office. The odds are heavily against an attempt at plagiarism being successful on this or other magazines. Even without having read the original, there are various ways in which an editor can detect a plagiarism—ways that it's just as well not to mention here—and there is always the chance that some one on the staff has happened to read the original.

As to "Ramon Stone Bradon," those of you living in Fort Worth have a chance to do a little investigating of your own.

OUR story, "Bad Medicine," by Colonel George B. Rodney, again brings up discussion of the Custer fight:

War Department,
Office of the Judge Advocate General,
Washington.

I read Colonel Rodney's story, "Bad Medicine," with great interest, because of the fact that it is built around the Sioux Campaign of 1876, in which General Custer and nearly half of the Seventh Cavalry were wiped out at the battle of the Little Big Horn. It so happened that, having since early youth avidly devoured everything relating to this fight that I could get hold of, and having the general situation quite well fixed in my mind, I was stirred to do some original investigation upon seeing last fall a movie called "Bob Hampton of Placer," which, it seemed to me, gave a most erroneous picture of the fight.

I THEREFORE consulted the original records; the telegraphic reports of General Terry to General Sheridan; the official reports of Sheridan, Terry, Gibbon, Reno and Benteen, and Sheridan's comments upon Indian accounts of the fight sent in by the Interior Department; and I made a careful study of the very voluminous record of the Reno court of inquiry held at Chicago in 1879. Within the past few days, too, I availed myself of an opportunity to go over the whole matter with General Godfrey, who commanded one of Benteen's companies during the expedition; and likewise with General Hugh L. Scott, who is perhaps better acquainted with the Indian accounts of what took place on the Little Big Horn than any other man living.

I THINK that Colonel Rodney has fallen into some errors in his very vivid account of the fight. He maps out a definite plan of battle which sends Benteen with three companies across the river to attack the Indian village in flank, while Reno, supported by Custer, was to attack in its front. But this is a mistake. There was no such plan. Benteen never crossed the river at all, nor was he ordered to do so. On the contrary, he was detached from the column at least two hours before Reno received any attack orders whatever, and was sent by Custer off to the left, diverging from the column at a left oblique, after the command had passed the divide between the Rosebud and the Little Big Horn.

His orders were "to go to a line of bluffs" several miles off to the left, and "to pitch into anything he found and send back word to General Custer if he found anything." These orders were twice amended by messenger after he had left the column, the purport of the amendments being that if he found nothing, to go on to the next line of bluffs; and if he still found nothing to go on into the valley beyond, and if there was nothing there, into the next valley.

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Nothing in his orders referred to or contemplated any cooperation with the rest of the command; and he was far to the rear when Reno was ordered to attack the village. The line of bluffs he went to explore was miles off the trail, and when he reached them he skirted their base for a long distance, traveling ten or twelve miles before coming to the conclusion that it was useless to go farther in that direction.

He then took a right oblique and struck the trail of the regiment several miles from the ford at which Reno first crossed, following it toward the river until he was warned by some Crow scouts, Half Yellow Face among them, to keep to the right. Reno's retreat was taking place when Benteen arrived in sight of the valley of the Little Big Horn, and the plain below on the western side of the river was then swarming with Sioux, who appeared to be engaged in annihilating a few of Reno's men who presumably had been unhorsed during the disorderly flight of his column in its retreat for the bluffs on the eastern bank.

Benteen's route was therefore at a left oblique to the route of the regiment for several miles—then more nearly parallel with it, but far to the left and rear for several miles; then slanting to the right at the same angle, till he struck the trail, still several miles behind the regiment. His appearance upon the scene of action was, to use his own language, "providential, or accidental, whichever you choose to call it." Had he not used his own judgment and disregarded his orders, he would have been, he says, twenty-five miles away when Reno crossed the river to attack.

ANOTHER point which tends to convey a wrong impression is the reference made to Custer's order to Benteen to bring up the packs. That order, signed "W. W. Cook," read: "Benteen—come on—big village—be quick—bring packs;" and below, "P. S. Bring packs." But it was not, as might appear from its contents, a desperate, frantic appeal by Custer for ammunition. It was sent, not after he had engaged the Indians at all, but some time before; and Trumpeter Martin, who brought it to Benteen, whom he found several miles back on the trail, was in a highly elated frame of mind, telling Benteen that Adjutant Cook had hurriedly scribbled the order just after the village was sighted from the bluffs to which Custer had ridden after Reno left to cross the river, and that the general had turned to his men, exclaiming with a cheer and a wave of the hat, "Courage, boys, we have got them."

He told Benteen that "it was the biggest village he ever saw; and the Indians were skedaddling." Now, what did Benteen do with that order? Did he rush back to hurry up the packs, and thereby furnish a dramatic incident to adorn a tale? Marry, he did not. He stopped a moment to show it to Capt. Weir, who was riding behind him, and calmly shoved it in his pocket. And he did this, as he says, for several reasons. One was that Capt. McDougall and not he was in charge of the packs, and he thought Gen. Custer had made a mistake; that he had already sent one messenger from Custer to find McDougall and tell him to hurry. (This first messenger was probably sent by Custer at or about the time he ordered Reno to cross and charge the village.) A second reason was that Martin reported the Indians "skedaddling." A third, that he would only have lost time himself and not expedited the arrival of the packs if he doubled back for them, for they were then strung out, several miles behind, and word had already been sent to McDougall. Custer's men, moreover, had fifty rounds of carbine ammunition in their belts, not twenty; and fifty more in the saddle bags, besides eighteen rounds for the pistols; more, very likely, than they had either time or opportunity to use.

GENERAL GODFREY tells me that as Benteen's command approached the river, they could hear heavy firing to their right, down the stream; and that after they joined Reno on the bluff, at least two heavy volleys were distinctly heard by many of the command. But Benteen says he heard no firing at all, except a few scattering shots, except what he both heard and saw in the valley on the east side of the river, when the Indians appeared to be finishing up the unfortunate ones of Reno's column who had lost their mounts.

General Godfrey told me that they located Reno on the bluffs by riding up to Half Yellow Face, and saying to him "Soldiers," at the same time pointing to the valley. Half Yellow Face shook his head and pointed to the bluffs, where they made out the forms of Reno's men on the hill, and rode on to join him. When they arrived, they found Reno's men badly blown, excited, some crying; and Hare, General Godfrey's lieutenant, who had been with the scouts, told him that he was "—— glad to see him"; that they "had had a big fight in the bottoms and got whipped like ——"; which was a mild expression under the circumstances.

THE story of Reno's advance, after his order from Custer to "take as rapid a gait as you think prudent and charge the village"; his rapid crossing of the river; the momentary halt to reform; the passage through the fringe of timber on the other side and the charge in line—three companies abreast—for two miles down the valley; until, finding himself led on by hundreds of Indians in his front, who seemed first to run away and then return, screening the movements of their main force behind an immense cloud of dust; and realizing that they were passing in parties of five to forty to his left and rear, he stopped, dismounted and formed a skirmish line to the left of a point of timber which jutted into the plain; how, assailed in flank, in front, and finally in rear, he withdrew his line to the edge of the woods; how the Sioux crept up upon him, using the protection of the timber more skilfully than the soldiers could; how he quickly determined that he must get out quickly or stay there forever; how he ordered the companies to form, mounted, in column of fours, and was fired into, pointblank, by thirty or forty Indians just as the men were in the saddle; how he ordered them to dismount and then to mount again; how he led the retreat at a run across the plain for the river; all these things are rich in incident if one but has the patience to dig them out.

The picture of the Sioux, in all their hellish regalia, riding along the side of the column, pumping shots from newly acquired Winchesters laid across their pommels; of Varnum rushing at full speed to the front and crying: "For God's sake, men, don't run; we've got to go back and save the wounded"; of Hodgson, thrown into the river, as were many others, when his horse essayed the nine-foot jump downward, floundering out only to be shot down;

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of McIntosh, shot while vainly trying to rally his men in the brush; of Wallace racing along with two warriors close beside him, afraid to shoot for fear that if he killed their ponies they would get him from the ground, and so keeping them ducking to their ponies' sides by throwing down his pistol; these and a hundred more snap-shots form but a small part of the story of the fight on the Little Big Horn.

Some day I shall try to write it all. I can not now. But if I were a writer of stories, there is the material here for a wonderful one; a regular hair-raiser, in more ways than one.

AS TO what happened to Custer, I think nobody really knows. General Godfrey, some years after the battle, had Chief Gall take him over the field, and Gall told him, in signs, for neither could speak the other's language, how the Indians handled their forces and swept over Custer like a wave. Curly, the Crow scout, and another, "Man-who-walks-with-him" (I'm not sure about this last name), went with General Scott over the whole route from the divide to the ridge where Custer was found, and told him all they knew. But it is doubtful whether they were actually in the fight. Most of the scouts ran away before they struck the Sioux. The only testimony which can not be doubted was that found upon the stricken field itself; and even as to what that told, there was and still is such difference of opinion that it is hard to say whether it was a gallant, desperate defense, or a panic and a rout. Perhaps it partook of the nature of both. Only one thing is sure—no one was left to tell the tale.—W. A. GRAHAM, Lt.-Col., J. A., U. S. A.

Ft. D. A. Russell, Wyoming.

The letter from Lt.-Col. W. A. Graham, Judge Advocate Dept., is intensely interesting in every detail. He has had unusual opportunities for studying official records that were not available to me in the scrutiny of the great fight on the Little Big Horn. I am sorry to say that I must admit one error in the story. You will note in the story that the text and the map do not agree on page 71. There is no question about it. I made a slip when I said that Benteen was ordered to "cross the river." His route as shown on the map shows that he always kept to the east of the river, the Little Big Horn, and that when he got to the junction of the little creek (called Benteen's Creek now) he turned off to his right and worked down stream. I am very sorry for this slip.

FROM a close study of the maps and records that I had I am convinced and have always been, that there was no definite plan *before the fight.* I do not believe a careful reader will find in the story that I have said there was one. For the reader I sketched the plan or the lack of one as the fight was actually conducted; the straggling advance in columns too far separated for mutual support; the sending of Benteen to the left to push down the valley; the later detaching of Reno; the pack-trains with MacDougall two miles behind hitting the line if at all, where they could; the fight that Reno had in the brush; the retreat to the bluffs, etc., and the final catastrophe on the hills to the east of the creek.

Much of my data came from Cyrus Townsend Brady's admirable compilation of papers in his two books "North-western Fights and Fighters" and "Indian Fights and Fighters." (Of course I went over the country too.) You have the account dictated to General Scott by Left Hand. I believe that common consent discards the story of Curly the Crow. He is said to have run away from the field before the fight and by consequence knew nothing of what actually occurred.

I am sorry if I have written anything that can be proved wrong in the story of the fight. I do not think I have done so. I am like the Scotchman in the yarn, who said: "Aye, mon, I'm no sayin' that I canna be conveenced *but* by —— I'd like to see the mon who can conveence me!"

As Colonel Graham says: "The only testimony that can not be doubted was that found upon the stricken field itself. Only one thing is sure—that no one was left alive to tell the tale."—GEO. B. RODNEY.

A WORD or two from F. R. Bechdolt concerning his story in this issue:

Carmel, Calif.

After the Alamo Santa Ana's troops burned the bodies of the Americans on a gigantic bonfire. There was no burial and hence in the strict sense of the word there was, of course, never a boothill there. But the episode is the first of those big affairs where men died bravely with their boots on in the West, and it had a decided influence on the conduct of men west of the Mississippi, particularly in the Southwest. It played a large part in history of succeeding boothills. Therefore it is used in this article although there were no graves and no wooden headboards for these heroes.

The date herein comes from many sources. Among books which have furnished me with dates, names and in some cases details, are: "Vigilante Days and Ways," by N. P. Langford; "The Life of Billy Dixon Who Fought at Adobe Walls;" "The History of Montana," published 1885, by Warner, Beers & Company, Chicago; "The Overland Stage to California," by Frank Root and William E. Connely; "History of Texas," by Anna Pennybacker. Also D. F. McCarthy of Lipscomb, Texas, who was in the San Simon and the Animas in the early days, John H. Slaughter of Douglas, Arizona, James J. East, Douglas, Arizona, N. B. Shropshire, Douglas, Arizona, Philip Morse, San Diego, California, and others.—F. R. BECHDOLT.

ORIGINAL paintings of *Adventure* covers that have not already been disposed of are for sale to the highest bidders. No bid of less than ten dollars per cover will be considered. Any one may bid for as many covers as he wishes to. Send in your bid or bids any time. On July first the paintings will be sent express collect to the highest bidders. It is a good idea to name a second and third choice in case some one else outbids you for your favorite painting. Most of the paintings are on canvas and measure about thirty by twenty-one inches, with no lettering on them other than the artist's signed name.—A. S. H.

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VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

These services of *Adventure* are free to any one. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you **read and observe the simple rules,** thus saving needless delay and trouble for us. The whole spirit of the magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help we're ready and willing to try. **Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.**

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you, *post-paid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of the last issue of each month.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 109 *Mountfort St., Boston, Mass., can supply* Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL SELL: One hundred and fifty-nine numbers, October 1913 to Mid-March 1922. Complete. Twenty-five dollars.—JOHN H. MACKEY, 31 East Ashley St., Jacksonville, Fla.

WILL BUY: Mid-August, 1919. Must be in good condition. One dollar and fifty cents.—Address C. E. POWERS, Lake City, Iowa.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3,000 welcomed.

Camp-Fire Stations

Our Camp-Fire is extending its Stations all over the world. Any one belongs who wishes to. Any member desiring to meet those who are still hitting the trails may maintain a Station in his home or shop where wanderers may call and receive such hospitality as the Keeper wishes to offer. The only requirements are that the Station display the regular sign, provide a box for mail to be called for and keep the regular register book and maintain his Station in good repute. Otherwise Keepers run their Stations to suit themselves and are not responsible to this magazine or representative of it. List of Stations and further details are published in the Camp-Fire in the first issue of each month.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Addresses

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Assn. of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

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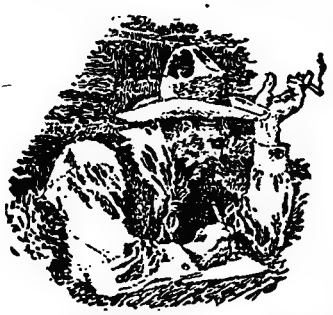
Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.



QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses for full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

1, 2. The Sea. In Two Parts
3. Islands and Coasts
4, 5. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
6. Australia and Tasmania
7. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
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9. Philippine Islands
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Japan's Royal Family

IT'S the oldest in the world:

Question:—"Will you please tell me something of the royal family of Japan? How long have they ruled? Where did they spring from? And something of their marriage laws.

I can't see when they could marry outside royalty or are they permitted to marry commons? Has the emperor much real power?

If this is published please withhold my name and address."

Answer, by Mrs. Knudson:—Mythology and history are somewhat mixed in the early Japanese records; but, according to the mythological stories of the origin of the nation, the islands and their

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people are the offspring of the gods. The present imperial house is supposed to be directly descended from the Sun Goddess, through Jimmu Tenno, the first earthly ruler to ascend the throne of Japan in 660 B.C. And, though authentic history of the country does not begin until during the fifth and sixth centuries *after* Christ, it still remains true that the Japanese reigning family stands forth as the oldest such in the world.

Yoshihito, who only recently (Nov. 25, 1921) delegated his power, because of ill health, to Prince Regent Hirohito, is the 124th Mikado—or emperor as he is now called in English translations of official documents—descended from Jimmu Tenno.

Modern historians believe that the Japanese are a mixed race, made up of migrations from the Asiatic continent and the islands to the south. Their form of government was crude until Buddhism was introduced from China in the sixth century A.D. Then, through its influence, organized government began to conform to that of China. Throughout all this, however, the records of the imperial family of Japan are unbroken.

In theory the Mikado has always been to his subjects the source and head of all powers; in practise he has rarely been given much of a chance to exercise his power until recent years. Behind the throne generally stood some influential family, which managed by force of arms to usurp the executive rights of the empire.

Soon after the conversion of the country to Buddhism it was the Fujiwara family, then the Taira, the Minamoto, the Hojo, and the Ashikaga during the Middle Ages, and in modern times the Tokugawa. Under these military ruling family heads, or Shoguns, were officials, or lords, called *daimyos*. Each *daimyo* had a following of "gentleman" warriors, or *samurai*. The organization was similar to the feudalism of medieval Europe.

In 1867-8 a revolution overthrew the last of the Tokugawa shoguns and restored the Mikado to power.

The present constitution of Japan dates from Feb. 11, 1889, and provides that the empire shall be reigned over and governed by "a line of emperors unbroken for ages eternal." The executive power is therein vested in the emperor, and is exercised by him through ten ministers whom he appoints and who are responsible to him. The imperial throne is succeeded to by male descendants in the line of imperial ancestors—customarily by the eldest son of the imperial family.

The empress consort has always been chosen from some native noble family. Yoshihito's consort was, before marriage, Princess Sadako, the fourth daughter of Prince Kujo Michitaka. There are many noble families in the native aristocracy descended from the various offshoots of the imperial family, from the Shoguns, and from the *daimyos*. As a consequence the Japanese imperial family is entirely native and national with no blood of alien race.

Names and addresses of "Ask Adventure" department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in alternate issues of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.

The Quest for Arcadia

THE South Sea Islands used to be full of Arcadians. But that was before they took to wearing pants:

Question:—"Tiring of the endless grubbing for money only to spend it in cafés, theaters, movies, rent, clothes, taxes, etc., all of which give no satisfaction and leave one still looking for something else, I crave a change that will bring relief.

Do you know of any small island or atoll in the South Seas, preferably uninhabited and yet capable of supporting life, where I could take my bride for a honeymoon, lasting one, two, or five years; where we could live in a miniature paradise, wearing little or no clothing, and subsisting on the fruits of the soil and the fish of the sea?

That's a rather large order, I'll admit, but I'm hoping that you can fill it.

If such a project is feasible and you know of some such location, will you kindly tell me the best route; what supplies, if any, we should take; and approximately the minimum expense."—BRUCE COLE, Des Moines, Ia.

Answer, by Mr. Charles Brown:—It is a "rather large order" you have sent me, and I am saying at the start that I can not fill it. Though I do know of small islands and atolls in the South Seas, I could not suggest any of them as a place for you and your bride; for, you see, they are in the grip of great trading concerns and as a consequence have become disgustingly commercialized. So that you wouldn't be happy, especially since you have tired of the "endless grubbing for money." To take your bride into the South Seas, questing for "a change that will bring relief," would be equivalent to nothing more than jumping from the frying-pan into the fire.

The form which I am enclosing tells of Tahiti. Still again, I refer you to "On the Love Path," an article by Angus McGreagor, in the *Sunset Magazine* (San Francisco, Calif.), of September, 1921. By all means read this account of hunting for love in the South Seas.

I am sorry that I can not send you an encouraging letter. But the old order of things in the South Seas has changed.

The "Buckeye" Again

CONCERNING the subjoined letter, Mr. Beriah Brown frankly concedes that the writer "has it on" him, adding that this type of craft has certainly experienced a wonderful development since he went cruising about in them during his Annapolis days:

Philadelphia.

In the January 20th number there was a question answered in "Ask Adventure," which interested me very much, viz., the one regarding the Chesapeake "buckeye" or "bugeye," as it is commonly called.

Before adding my mite of information regarding that craft, may I say that I have cruised "inside" and "out" from Capes Henry and Charles to Cape Cod and parts of the Maine coast.

I have seen the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays, as well as the Great South Bay, L. I., Long Island

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and Nantucket Sounds, and Casco Bay, Me., in all their moods, and have sailed and cruised in nearly everything from a home-made, flat-bottomed, sloop-rigged craft, with the fin of an old iron rudder for a centerboard (when beating to windward she made great headway to leeward!) to sloops, schooners and motor-cruisers of the sixty-foot class.

Having shown you my credentials, so to speak, I will "get on with my knitting."

To begin with, the genuine buckeye was *not* flat-bottomed. The buckeye Mr. Beriah Brown refers to must have been the forerunner of the stanch and nifty-looking boat I became acquainted with while cruising on the Chesapeake. Those boats were a sturdily built craft, intended to weather heavy gales while going to and from the oyster grounds.

I know from experience that it can blow some on the Chesapeake, especially off the mouth of the Potomac, where you might as well be in the middle of the Atlantic, for no land can be seen on either side. An open, flat-bottomed boat could not live in such waters as is sometimes kicked up there.

Those boats were anywhere from thirty to fifty feet over all, with plenty of freeboard—two rakish masts, rigged with leg-o'-mutton sails, and the larger ones sometimes flew a storm-jib; but with no bowsprit, and believe me, they were very fast sailers. They had practically a flush deck, and in many cases were fitted with cabins fore and aft.

If they were ever propelled by oars, it was only in a dead calm when close to port—an experience I have had in large boats on numerous occasions, when anxious to make the mooring or dock—a case of "white-ash breeze" or miss that appointment at the club or something like that.

I thoroughly agree with Mr. Brown that the yawl or ketch rig is an ideal one for cruising, and is easily handled by two men, though I do not advise any man to go it alone. He would more than have his hands full, especially in sudden squalls, where shortening sail is often a matter of seconds.

Now this letter was not written with the idea of being smart or intending to trip Mr. Brown up in any way—as he stated himself, "There may have been some changes in the size and build of those craft since I was familiar with them which was many years ago—" but is submitted in the Camp-Fire spirit, with the hope it may be of some help.—EDWIN EVANS.

Free service, but we don't pay the postage to get it to you.

The Australian Squatter

MOST prosperous class of men in the world, declares Mr. Goldie, incidentally to describing the sheep-raising industry of his country. And think of renting 500,000 acres of land for $375 a year!

Question:—I am seeking information in regard to resources and inducements offered in Australia by the British Government.

I am interested in sheep-raising and wish to know how much money is required for the trip and starting a sheep-ranch."— LLOYD I. SHOWERS, Medford, Ore.

Answer, by Mr. Goldie:—Before proceeding to answer your inquiry regarding sheep-raising in Australia, I would like to correct what is evidently an erroneous impression in your mind as to the government of this country. The British Government are in no way responsible for the settlement of people in Australia, which is a self-governing commonwealth.

Australia's pastoral industry forms a very interesting subject. As you doubtless know, we produce the finest wool in the world, and sheep-raising in this country is carried on under conditions which are rather unique. A sheep-ranch in Australia, which we call a sheep "station," has usually an extensive acreage.

Our pastoralists here are known as "squatters," and are mostly men of British stock, who have conquered the isolation of our back country and made life worth living there. Some of the homes of our squatters are like old-style mansions, and are centers of small settlements, over which the pastoralist is a kind of unofficial lord.

Great as has been the development in the pastoral industry in Australia, this country still offers to the newcomer possessed of some means, best opportunities for securing grazing-lands for stock-raising that can be obtained in any country in the world. The beginner has at hand splendid flocks and herds, and all kinds of useful horses as well. Breeding-stock may be purchased at values far below those ruling in other countries.

Stud breeding of sheep has developed into a science in Australia. The merino has leading subtypes, and these types are adapted to different classes of country, with climatic and soil variations.

For instance, sheep on the great plains country are of a large, robust type, which produces medium to strong wool. No other type can produce such wonderful returns in wool and mutton on such areas.

On the other hand, the type best adapted to the highlands, where the pastures are somewhat lighter and the climate cooler, is a smaller merino, bearing a very fine fleece. The best stud stock commands enormous prices; as much as $20,000 have been paid for an Australian-bred merino ram.

The newcomer to Australia seeking to follow the most fascinating and freest of lives, and the most profitable of rural undertakings, has no need to acquire beforehand, information as to the best commerce of stock to keep on any holding he may obtain in any district. He is not called upon to buy his knowledge with his own experience. This has been gained for him, and he need only consult with his free-hearted neighbors, and he will have no difficulty in obtaining advice and guidance.

At one time a property of 200,000 acres was not too large for one man and his family to manage on, but today 5,000 acres is considered a good pastoral proposition, and in fact there are instances in which the smaller area mentioned has returned more profits in a year than the larger one. The State Governments have all done something toward the reduction of the larger holdings, with a view to increasing settlement and thus insuring that more production shall come from the land.

Pastoral country in Australia is usually divided into first, second and third class grades. As in all other new countries, the richer soil was the first to be occupied and worked to advantage. As conditions improved, second class became as desirable

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as the first class had previously been. Then the third class came into occupation, and in time proved profitable, because it was secured at low values and had been brought within easy communication with the markets.

In the most closely settled States, such as Victoria and Tasmania, the great extent of the land is held under freehold, and the newcomer will find it best to buy an improved place, or better still to purchase some good grazing-land which is still subject to considerable improvement. If he has moderate means, the buyer can make a fair profit on his capital, while he continues to increase the value of his holding. Well fenced and watered sheep-lands, provided with a homestead, may be bought in the States mentioned at from £4 to £8 per acre, according to its carrying-capacity, while properties in first-class order and capable of carrying two sheep to the acre cost considerably more.

In the southern pastoral districts of New South Wales there are great productive grazing-properties which carry from one sheep to an acre to three sheep to two acres.

The newcomer will find larger estates varying in value from £4 to £7 per acre in this important section, comprising the Upper Hunter country and the New England table-lands. Throughout this section there are large properties on which both sheep and cattle are bred, raised and found.

Naturally as one goes farther away from the big centers of population land becomes cheaper. For instance, in Western Australia there are vast stretches of unoccupied lands; and to those who are willing to pioneer these sections the State offers most generous terms. You can rent half a million acres in the West for from $375 to $1,250 per annum. The proposition looks impossible, but yet pioneers have come into similar country on these terms and have succeeded.

Back from the northern coast, and on some of the rivers, pastoralists work millions of acres very successfully. Reports of droughts in Australia are generally very exaggerated, but droughts do occur.

The fact remains that there is probably no class of man in the world who, taken all round, is as prosperous as the Australian squatter. May you join their ranks, and be one of the most successful.

When you get something for nothing, don't make the other fellow pay the postage on it.

Archeologist Wants to Swap

ANYBODY need any stone weapons?

Question:—"I am unable to ascertain the right party to address, covering the subject that I desire information on, and your section, edged weapons, firearms, etc., seems to come nearer to my subject than others in the issue of the magazine before me. Hence I am writing you trusting you may place it in its proper location.

I am an archeologist of some note, and have followed this from personal pleasure for years, and have excavated in the Indian mounds in this country, in the White River district of Arkansas, also at Toltec, Ark., Pablo Beach, Florida, and on the Chattahoochee River in Georgia, unearthing many valuable stone weapons of a prehistoric nature and of beautiful workmanship and design. I have also collected many rare and interesting relics from the North American Indians. In the last few years I have visited Mexico, and excavated in the Valley of Mexico, at San Juan de Teotihuacan and around Mexico City, and lately I have returned from a trip to Panama, Ecuador, Peru, where I found many varied and interesting relics from the Maya race in Panama, and from the Inca Indians in Peru.

I only desire a few specimens from each race, and I have many valuable relics that I want to exchange with other collectors for relics that I do not possess, and I should be most happy to be directed in this matter, to readers of the *Adventure* magazine whose fancy leads them in this direction. I have had many adventures also in my pursuits of this pastime; but I am not a writer, and fear I lack the constructive ability to place them interestingly before your readers."—C. T. Prescott, P. O. Box 1655, New Orleans, La.

Answer, by Mr. Barker:—Pray accept my most sincere apologies and regrets for the delay in replying to your letter, the cause being that during an absence from home several letters—yours among them—were mislaid; and I have just seen them for the first time.

I regret that I can do so little to aid you. I do not collect the things you speak of, being a collector of and lecturer on practically firearms and blades only.

The best suggestion that I can make is that you write a letter to Camp-Fire, stating the case as you have to me and asking Mr. Hoffman to publish it; or perhaps Mr. Noyes, who handles the "Ask Adventure" section will publish your letter to me, just as it is. I will certainly suggest his doing so.

I regret that I can do no more.

Bulgarians and Czecho-Slovakians

IT'S a good thing to get a line on a people's national traits before settling down among 'em:

Question:—"As you will note from the letter-head, I am a lawyer. A client of mine, a Bulgarian, has been telling me that if I were to go to Bulgaria and learned the language I would be in a position to earn a much better living than is possible here. My income is about $5,000 per year.

He tells me that $10,000 converted into Bulgarian money would by virtue of the exchange situation make me an exceedingly rich man over there, and this money put out at interest in Bulgaria would produce an affluent income.

My wife and I, being of an adventurous turn and having no family, would like to follow out his suggestion providing this were true and that there were no dangers or obstacles that are not to be foreseen, by which I mean, oppressive taxation, hostility to Canadians, property confiscation, Bolshevism, etc.

My client tells me that Sofia is a thoroughly modern city, that there are a large number of English-speaking people there and that I would find it quite congenial.

Would you regard Hungary or Czecho-Slovakia more favorably than Bulgaria, for the purposes outlined?

The exchange rate to these countries is very low.

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If you consider it an advantageous move on my part what line of business would you regard as most suitable for me with legal education to follow?

How many leves (or kronen) would be required to enable one to live on the scale that a man would, say here or in the United States, with an income of $5,000 per year?

What would an eight-roomed house with conveniences cost in the countries mentioned?

Could you refer me to any books that I could read up concerning this matter?

I would appreciate very much your opinion on this project generally and in relation to the matters above mentioned.

I enclose 5 cents in U. S. coin for your reply."—— ——, Welland, Ont.

Answer, by Mr. Binda:—There are two answers to your inquiry. One is Yes and the other is No. If you should ask my advice only as to the desirability of living in such a city as Sofia on an income of $10,000 converted into the money of the country, I might say that it would be an excellent idea, but if you are at the present moment deriving in the neighborhood of $5,000 per year from your practise and have any idea of working up such a practise in Bulgaria, I think you would be making a very serious mistake.

A slight study of the Bulgarian people will show you that they are not far behind, as far as education goes. Most of the leading public men of Bulgaria have received a part of their education at the American College (Robert College) at Constantinople and are well versed in history, language and civilization of the Anglo-American countries. Besides, Bulgarians are natural linguists, and those of any learning at all have a very fluent command of a number of languages. They are also skilful diplomats and barristers, and that you would be obliged to overcome if you attempted to develop a practise in that country, and it would seem to me practically unsurmountable.

On the other hand, why not take your American or Canadian money and invest it in some business in that country that would give you a fair return? If you are willing to live on the products of the country, you will find that the cost of living is very low in Bulgaria, but you must make up your mind to do without a great many things that you consider necessities in this country. For example, you could not expect to find many conveniences in even the best of houses, and the prices of articles imported are necessarily very high, when reckoned in the coinage of the country.

I do not think that you would find in Bulgaria any oppressive taxation or hostility to Canadians, etc., but on the other hand, you would find living there very agreeable. There is not a large English colony, but English is freely spoken and English-speaking people are well received. It would be a pleasant place for an extended stay, if you are not too dependent upon your own efforts for your income.

Frankly, I would regard Czecho-Slovakia as more favorable than this country for your purpose. In Czecho-Slovakia you have modern cities and a race that is very active and more business-like than those of Bulgaria. Prague is a beautiful city to live in, and you would find many more attractive investments that would give you an income sufficient to live on until you had become accustomed to the country and learned the language.

Cowboy Songs

ONCE again it is necessary to issue the reminder that our "A. A." men have nothing to sell and nothing to advertise:

Question:—"I would like to have the words of two or three typical cowboy songs. Have you any books of cowboy and other outdoor-life songs for sale?

Is so, will you please acquaint me with particulars and price."—STANLEY C. FOSTER, New York.

Answer, by Mr. Frothingham:—You will find such songs as your letter mentions in any one of the following books, all of which may be bought at Brentano's on Fifth Avenue, New York; "Songs of Cowboys" (Houghton, Mifflin Co., publishers); "Cowboy Songs," complied by Lomax; "Songs of Men" (Houghton, Mifflin Co.)

The latter-named book is my own compilation and is full of man-size verse of outdoor life including a goodly amount of cowboy and other Western verse. The others deal with cowboy material entirely.

745 Riverside Drive,
New York.

R. B. Avison, Cottage Grove, Oregon, is on the warpath looking for a bit of verse which carries in each stanza the refrain: " 'Way off in the acres of stars." He will feel mighty grateful to any comrade who can help him out.—ROBERT FROTHINGHAM.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

Fishing in the Thousand Islands

VACATION time draweth nigh apace:

Question:—"Please send all possible information on fishing in the waters of the Thousand islands and neighboring lakes. What hotel accommodation can be obtained there? I intend spending my vacation there which begins on the 14th of August. Please include information about travel."—CHAS. A. GERHARD, Caldwell, N. J.

Answer, by Mr. Moore:—Your shortest, and perhaps cheapest, route to the Thousand Islands from Caldwell would appear to be from New York *via* N. Y. C. & H. R.R. by way of Troy, Utica, Carthage, to Cape Vincent. From Cape Vincent you can cross to Kingston, Ontario, or you can go east to Clayton, N. Y. If you come across the line to fish you will require an angler's license, which costs $2 per rod if you stay at a hotel, or $5 per rod if you move around in your own boat. This license may be secured from the Deputy Minister of Game and Fisheries, Toronto, but quite likely you could be spared such a wait by seeing one of the many game overseers in and about this forty-mile-long resort.

Around these islands, which run in size from a few feet to many acres, you will find black bass, large and small mouthed; maskinonge, blue and yellow pickerel, as well as many other varieties of lesser game fish. Where thousands of people congregate every year—for the Thousand Islands bring

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them from all directions—you will have no difficulty securing a boat, experienced boatmen and all the tackle necessary for the work.

You did not tell me whether you intended to come across the line or not. Consequently I can only tell you that hotels are numerous. On the American side you will find up-to-the-minute hostelries. At Alexandria Bay there are three; at Clayton, four; and one at Thousand Island Park. Across the river there are two at Kingston, four at Ganonoque, three at Brockville, six at Ivy Lea, five at Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Que. You might find a cheaper place to stop, but in any event ask the rates before you put your moniker on a register.

Maskinonge, pickerel and even black bass are taking the troll in August. You will need the stoutest possible tackle for the former as they are a very powerful fish, going up in weight to fifty and sixty pounds. This is merely in passing, for you will soon get on to all the tricks and dodges of angling when you get up among the fishermen at the islands.

Hope you have a fine trip. Good luck. If there is anything not clear, or something you want to know and I haven't told you, drop me a line any time.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose* full *return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

Money in Evergreen Berries

THIS looks too good to be true. No planting, no tending; just pick 'em and sell 'em:

Question:—"Will you kindly inform me the best fruit belt that you know of in Washington for picking small fruits, such as berries and apples? Will you kindly inform me when picking begins? Could you please tell me if labor is in demand in the picking season, and how long does it last? I am getting discharged soon, and would like a country job this Summer and Fall. Any information will be appreciated."—Floyd F. Sheely, Schofield Barracks, H. T.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—If you get to Seattle or Tacoma by June first you will just about be in time for the opening of the berry season, and there will be no difficulty about getting a job. The berry business in this section is growing rapidly; and here in Skagit County we will have several thousand acres coming into bearing this year, which will mean a demand for just that many more pickers.

The strawberry season lasts till raspberries come on. Then come the blacks and logans, after which the evergreens run well up to November. A man in Sedro, twenty miles from here, showed me some excellent berries he bought on November 11, and he expected to make another trip.

I believe there is a mighty good chance here for a fellow with a few dollars and a little ambition to lease a bunch of logged-off land and raise evergreens, as these berries grow wild here, yield tremendously for a picking season of at least two months and are in great demand for jams and jellies at six and even seven cents a pound. They require absolutely no care, and once started will spread like burrs. If you are interested let me know and I will do all I can to get you a line-up on the situation. This assistance would largely take the form of advice and introduction to people who would cooperate, as my time for year 1922 will be almost completely absorbed in getting a million-dollar water system started through the Skagit Valley. I enclose you a clipping from a local paper regarding this.

I can find time however to direct you so that you could go ahead, and I am sure the venture would be a success. What say?

Poison Fish

THIS inquirer had an interesting experience, even if it was a close call:

Question:—"I read your answer to an inquirer's question about fishing in South Africa with a lot of interest, and I hope you will be able to answer this one. I don't know much about fresh-water fishing. The only fishing I have ever done happened to be in salt water. I hate to try your patience in this manner, this being the second offense, but your reply to my first was so courteous and satisfactory that I thought I would risk it again. This one is about a certain small fish we caught in South African waters—Algoa Bay to be exact.

Our ship's crew was fishing over the side one Sunday morning, using all sorts of hooks and lines and queer bait; but the only thing we caught was a small pretty-colored fish about four to six inches long with a very pronounced belly. We put our catch in a bucket of salt water, intending to get enough to make a good meal. Somebody thought of giving our cat something extra this Sunday morning and threw one of our pretty fish to old Tom, which he greedily pounced upon and devoured, only to die in a series of fits.

There is no doubt but our fish was poisonous, and the death of our old tomcat probably saved us from a like fate. We threw the whole mess back into the water, but on hitting the water our pretty fishes refused to sink, swelling up like a toy balloon, their bellies extended like so many small blimps.

Have you ever heard of a fish like that, captain? And what kind of a fish can that be? Is it really poisonous, or what killed the cat? I wonder."—Fred Royal, Pittsburg, Pa.

P.S. Have you ever heard of anybody trying to shoot whales with a big elephant gun? I knew a South African skipper who was that kind of a sport."

Answer, by Captain Franklin:—Yours is a very interesting letter. Now I can not be certain, but I do know there are several kinds of real poisonous fish in the waters you mention. For instance the very luscious oysters obtained off Lourenço Marques are very dangerous for a white man to eat. I risked a dozen once in Beira; result, two doctors and a very busy stomach-pump.

I am of opinion that you caught either what we used to call a trigger-fish or else a burr-fish, both of which we were taught to avoid as poison.

The trigger-fish has gills which look very much like a trigger, and the burr-fish looks something like a mullet.

I don't know the names ichthyologists would give these fish. These are local names for them.

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LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

WILLIS, SAM. Formerly of Co. B., 325 M. G. Batt. Write to me; I've just returned from India and the Philippines and found you gone. I've something to tell you.—Address L. R. G., 524 N. 16th St., Murphysboro, Ill.

TOKAS, BASIL. Brother, missing ten years. Age twenty-six. Last heard of in Chicago. Thought to have joined the army. Tall, slim, dark, black hair and eyes, dimples. Any information will be greatly appreciated.—Address MARY TOKAS, 262 W. 22nd St., New York, N. Y.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

SHAW, ROBT. E. Last heard of in Fellows, Cal., employed by Associated Oil Co. About six feet tall, slender, light hair, blue eyes. Believed to have gone to N. W. Canada or Alaska following oil strike. Any information will be appreciated by his brother.—Address JEROME L. SHAW, 407 Hawthorne Ave., Williamsport, Pa.

COFFMAN, RALPH B. Age sixteen, about five feet, four inches, chunky build, brown eyes, light-brown hair. Was with a circus, later a carnival co., Summer of 1921. May be in Canada.—Address HERBERT COFFMAN, care of Red Cross, Los Angeles, Cal.

CONNER, JUSTIN CHAS. Last heard of in Uxbridge, Mass. Age thirty-seven. Working for banker. Write sister Lulu.—Address MRS. CAPT. JACK DAVIS, care of *Adventure.*

MANSFIELD, ROBERT ALLEN. Age forty-six, brown hair, blue eyes, slightly crossed. Last heard of in Arkansas in 1911. Any one knowing of his whereabouts kindly communicate with his sister.—Address MRS. WALTER C. GORDON, Tullahoma, Tenn.

SAILORS who occupied barracks 948 E, Camp Farragut, Great Lakes, Illinois, between January 10, 1919, and January 30, 1919, can help a disabled gob, by writing to Laurence K. Hyde, 3324 Aldrich Ave., South Minneapolis, Minn.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the February 10th issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

PERRY, ERNEST F. Lived at Gloversville, N. Y., until March, 1901, when he enlisted in the U. S. Army at Albany, N. Y. at the age of twenty-one. Served in the U. S. and the Philippines; was discharged and later reenlisted April 17, 1915. Then served in the quartermaster corps at Camp Harlingen, Texas, until Jan. 5, 1917, at which time he was honorably discharged from service at Marfa, Texas. Age now forty-three years. Any information concerning him will be appreciated by his friend.—Address MORRIS PALMER, 25 Elm St., Gloversville, N. Y.

BENNET, JOSEPH. Brother of the late Charles Bennet. Age thirty-five years. Telegram sent him in Springfield, Ohio, but was returned. Any information concerning him will be greatly appreciated.—Address GREENWOOD FUNERAL HOME, Regina, Sask., Canada.

VAUGHAN, JAS. Write to your wife and daughter Dorothy; they wish to adventure with you and understand.—Address MRS. GRACE VAUGHAN, 656 Eagle Rock Ave., Los Angeles, Cal.

BOB. Husband. Am well and comfortable. "*Trousour la memchos.*" Write me. PATSEY.—Address BOX 2122, Spokane.

YAGNER, SAM. Brother, please write if you see this. I am very anxious to hear from you. I am in Denver now.—Address JENNIE, Gen. Del., Denver, Colo.

CASE, DON. Left Kenneth, Mo., Nov. 29, 1921, for Texas looking for work. Supposed to be on the railroad as he is a section foreman. Is five feet ten inches tall, weighs 150 lbs., black eyes and hair, dark complexion. Is a little cross-eyed in his left eye. Any information regarding him will be greatly appreciated.—Address MRS. EFFIE CASE, R. F. D. No. 1, Van Alstyne, Texas.

LEWIS, ARTHUR C. Your wife is ill and needs you. Please write to her aunt.—Address MRS. STANLY JANKOWSKI, 5930 S. Winchester Ave., Chicago, Ill.

WILBURTH, HARRY L. Left home in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Feb. 5th, 1916, for Olean, New York. Anybody knowing his whereabouts will please notify his mother.—Address MRS. L. WILBURTH, 119 South Bay St., Milwaukee, Wis.

WISLIN, JOSEPH and HARRY. Went West over twenty years ago. Reported in San Francisco five years ago playing in movies, Joseph taking leading parts under stage name. Prior to that Harry lived in Fort Worth, Texas. Any information will be greatly appreciated by their brother.—Address ABE WISLIN, care of Gilefsky, 319 E. 100th St., New York, N. Y.

HUKILL, EUGENE S. Discharged from U. S. A. at New York in 1916. Last seen in Louisville, Ky., in March, 1916. Am very anxious to locate him and any information will be gladly received.—Address P. S. S., Box 3, Arminto, Wyo.

HINDS, GEORGE. Your old chum Leo wants to hear from you. Am going on my own in a few months and want you to join me as we originally planned in Seattle.—Write L. P., care of *Adventure.*

NAPIER, HARRY. Sometimes known as Harry Sanford. Left home near Charleston, W. Va., several years ago. Was last heard of at Spokane, Wash., in 1913. Any information concerning him will be gratefully appreciated by his sister.—Address MRS. BERTA GARRETSON, 522 Temple St., Hinton, W. Va.

KNIGHT, W. V. Would like to hear from you and please send address.—Address SAM HORTSFIELD, 1415 Stratton Ave., Nashville, Tenn.

CARROLL, ARDEN A. Born in Caldwell, Texas. Last heard of in Edmonton, Canada. Age about forty years, height about six feet, one inch. Weighs about 190. Any information will be appreciated.—Address JAMES A. BROADDUS, Hoonah, Alaska.

POUERS, GERTRUDE, MRS. Wife of Paul Mitchell. Missing twenty years. Last heard of in Chicago, Ill. Any information concerning her will be appreciated by her niece.—Address MRS. MABEL SHARON, 1433 20th St., Detroit, Mich.

ARBUCKLE, LOUIE McLANE. Am anxious. Write me 1840 Anaheim St., Long Beach, California.—MOTHER.

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REID, JACK E. Hubby please forgive me and send for me. I will come to you at once, anywhere. Please forgive me, I am terribly sorry. Write, come or send for me at once. I must see you. Love—Your wife "MICKEY."

LASSEN, CAPT. LORENZ. Information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated. Last seen on boat between Norfolk and Cape Charles about fifteen years ago.—Address P. O. BOX 20, Cape Charles, Va.

SMITH, ALBERT ERNEST. Last heard of in Detroit, 1920. Stated intention of entering service of Canadian Mounted Police. His brother anxious to locate him, for very important reasons concerning family affairs. Any information will be appreciated.—Address R. G. SMITH, care of "The Republican," Caruthersville, Missouri.

THOMPSON, IRVIN L. Left home in Springfield, Mass. Any information regarding him will be appreciated by his daughter.—Address L. B. T., care of *Adventure*.

HITTER, "FLIPP." Formerly of "B" Company 50th Infantry, A. F. G. Transferred to U. S. October, 1921. Also known as "The Frisco Kid," a professional fighter, last heard of in Fort Slocum, New York.—Write to "NIG."

OLSON, LAWRENCE, T. Please write and be sure to enclose your address as we wish to write to you. All is well here, and everything is all right with nothing at all to worry about. Write to the old address. MOTHER.

ABRAMS, WESTLY. Last heard of in U. S. Army in the Philippines in Fall of 1906 or 1907. Your old pal who left Bucyrus, Ohio, in 1904 also with you on your trip in the Blue Ridge Mountains, would like to hear from you. Your buddy C. A.—Address R. G. ARMSTRONG, Gen. Del., Edmonton, Alberta.

THE following have been inquired for in either the May 10th or May 20th issues of Adventure. They can get name of inquirer from this magazine:

ACKERN, HORACE; Baldwin, Harry; Bosse, Henry; Boyton, Joseph A.; Brautigan, Jack; Brent, C. G.; Brooks, Edward Dr.; Chapline, Clyde; Cox, Sherman W. and Austin; De Bruycker, Valentino; Everett, E.; Grezense, Lawrence; Hall, C. J.; Lamar; Dr. Huff, Ray and sister Vera; Irvine, Thomas M.; Johnson, Norman Le Roy; La Porte, Harry; Lewey, Harry F.; Maccauley or McCauley, Dudley; Merz, Alfred; Penavin, George; Prunty, Peter, Private; Rumpf, George A.; Seabourn, (or Sheabourne-Seabourne) See, John; Sharpe, Cecil; Stewart Donald or Russell; Stocker, Ethel C.; Truffer, Frank; Washbroad, Tommy.

MISCELLANEOUS: Would like to hear from any member of the 14th Battalion R. M. R. Canadian Army who was acquainted with Raymond Kearns, who died in action Easter Monday, 1917, at Vimy Ridge.

UNCLAIMED mail is held by Adventure for the following persons, who may obtain it by sending us present address and proof of identity.

ALDRIDGE, F. P.; Bollinger, C. J.; Buckley, Ray; Bertsch, Miss Elizabeth; Bonner, Major J. S.; Butterfield, E.; Barrett, Raymond; Brown, W. E.; Bushby, Ed. P.; Bailey, Dick; Benter, Jack; Blaucher, Chas. A.; Byron, J.; Balensifer, Frank A. W.; Courtlandt, Victor; Cook, William N.; Cook, Elliot D.; Connor, A. M.; Craun, G. P.; "Chink"; Clark Wilfred J.; Corbett, Fred P.; Coles, Bobby; Carpenter, Robert S.; Coston, O. A.; Chatvaire, J.; Coleman, J. J.; Carr, John; Clark, Ernest S.; De Brissac Sr. Ricardo; de Rouffiquac, J.; Evans, B. R.; Fisher, 1st Sgt. R.; Farnsworth, Donald; Ford, Harry; Franklin, R.; Gale, Geo. A.; Grimm, H. C.; Harris, Walter J.; Howard, Charlie; Haskins, S. S.; Hunt, Daniel O'Connell; Hughes, Frank E.; Hooker, William Francis; Hailstorm, Chief; Jones, John Paul; Jackson, Robert R.; Kuckaby, William Francis; Kutcher, Sgt. Harry; Kelly, C. H.; Kennedy, Paul I.; Larisey, Jack; Lafler, Harry; Lee, William R., M. D.; Lonley, Jack; Lauder, Harry; Leuane, Bob; Lenihan, Bob; Lovett, Harold S.; McAdams, W. B.; MacDonald, Tony; Mackintosh, D. T. A.; Mendelson, Alick; Minor, John, Dr.; McKee, A. L.; McNair, Henry S.; McCafferty, Charles B.; McNickel, W. A.; McGovern, T. P.; Nichols, Chas. B.; Nelson, Frank Lovell; Nylander, Towne, J.; O'Hara, Jack; Parker, G. A.; Parrott, Private D. C.; Phillips, Buffington; Pigeon, A. H.; Pulis, H. F.; Posner, George A.; Raines, Wm. L.; Rich, Wagoner Bob; Rogan, Chas. B.; Ryder, H. S.; Raymond, C. E.; Rundle, Merrill G.; Roberts, Walter; Rutherford, Max; St. Clair, Fred; Schmidt, G.; Scott, James, Private; Smith, C. O.; Starr, Ted; Stocking, C. B.; Sloan, Charles A.; Stewart, Ernest J.; Spencer, Robert; Schafer, George; Tripp, Edward; Terry, Lambert; Von Glucke, Byron; Van Tyler, Chester; Ward, Frank B.; Williams, Roger; Woeller, Erich; Wilson, Ray; Yames, Reuben L.

MISCELLANEOUS: Third Officer; WS-XV; L. T. 348; No. 439; S. 177284; W. W. T.; J. C. H.; 2480; T. W. S.; C. C. C.; 11870; L. T. No. 401; Corporal.

PLEASE send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you.—Address L. PATRICK GREENE, care of *Adventure*.

A LIST of unclaimed manuscripts will be published in the January 10th and July 10th issues of Adventure, and a list of unclaimed mail will be published in the last issue of each month.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

JUNE 10TH ISSUE

Besides the new serial and complete novelette mentioned on the second page of this issue the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

EXPLAIN IT YOURSELF — ***Thomson Burtis***
Over Chesapeake Bay an airman meets his test.

THE CHARM — ***L. Patrick Greene***
African superstition, and a white man's luck.

VENTY — ***Charles Victor Fischer***
A ventriloquist at sea.

A SHOT AT A VENTURE **A Three-Part Story** **Conclusion** — ***Captain Dingle***
Red Saunders holds a round-up in Papua.

THE LAW OF AVERAGES IN MUSIC CREEK — ***W. D. Hoffman***
Revenge in a gold camp of '49.

CHEECHAKO LUCK — ***Wilbur Watkins***
Fortune plays strange tricks in Alaska.

THE NET — ***Harold Lamb***
Buriat vs. Russian on the waters of "Father Yenisei."

LONG KNIVES AND SHORT — ***H. H. Birney, Jr.***
Old Army days, and Indian treachery.

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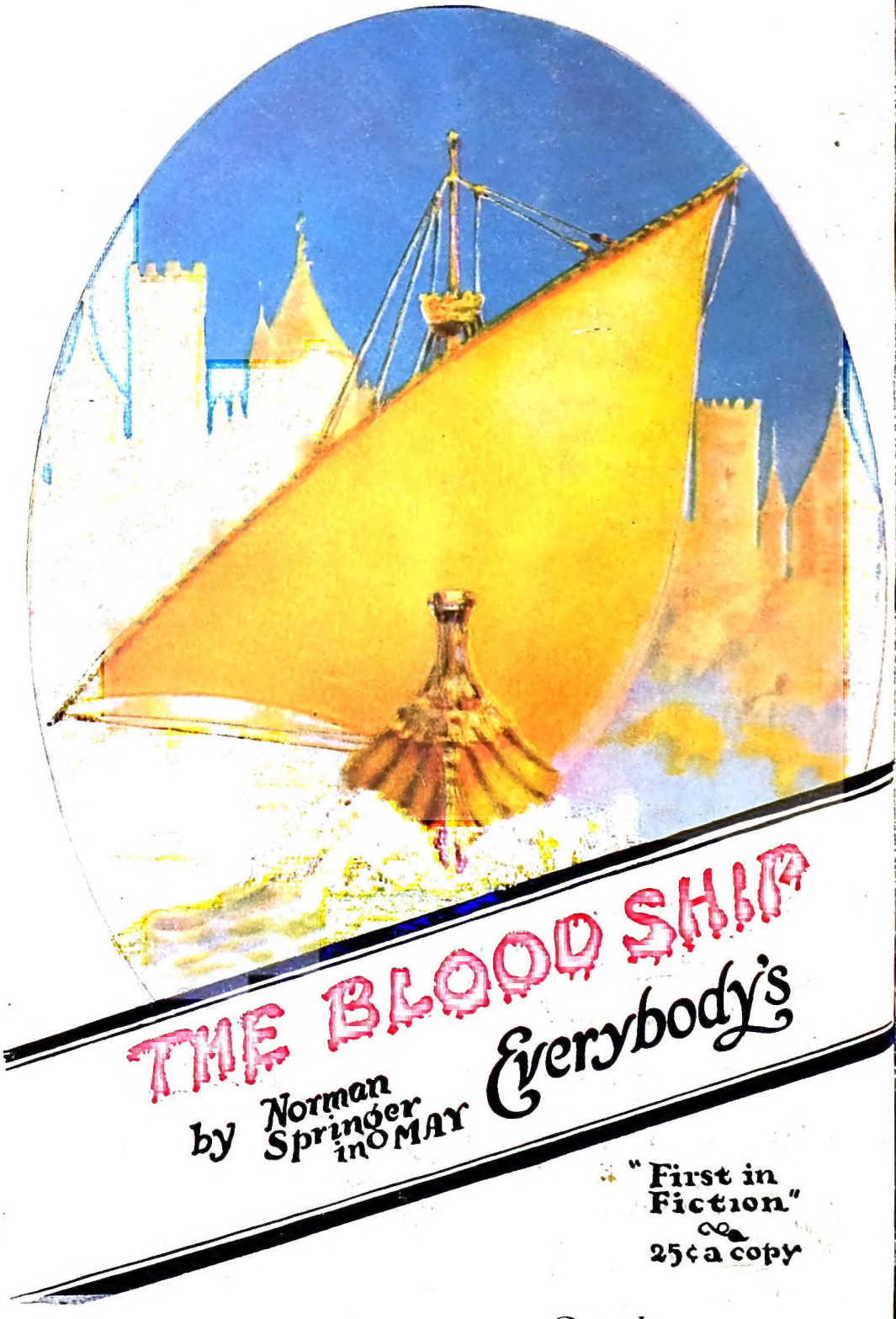

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